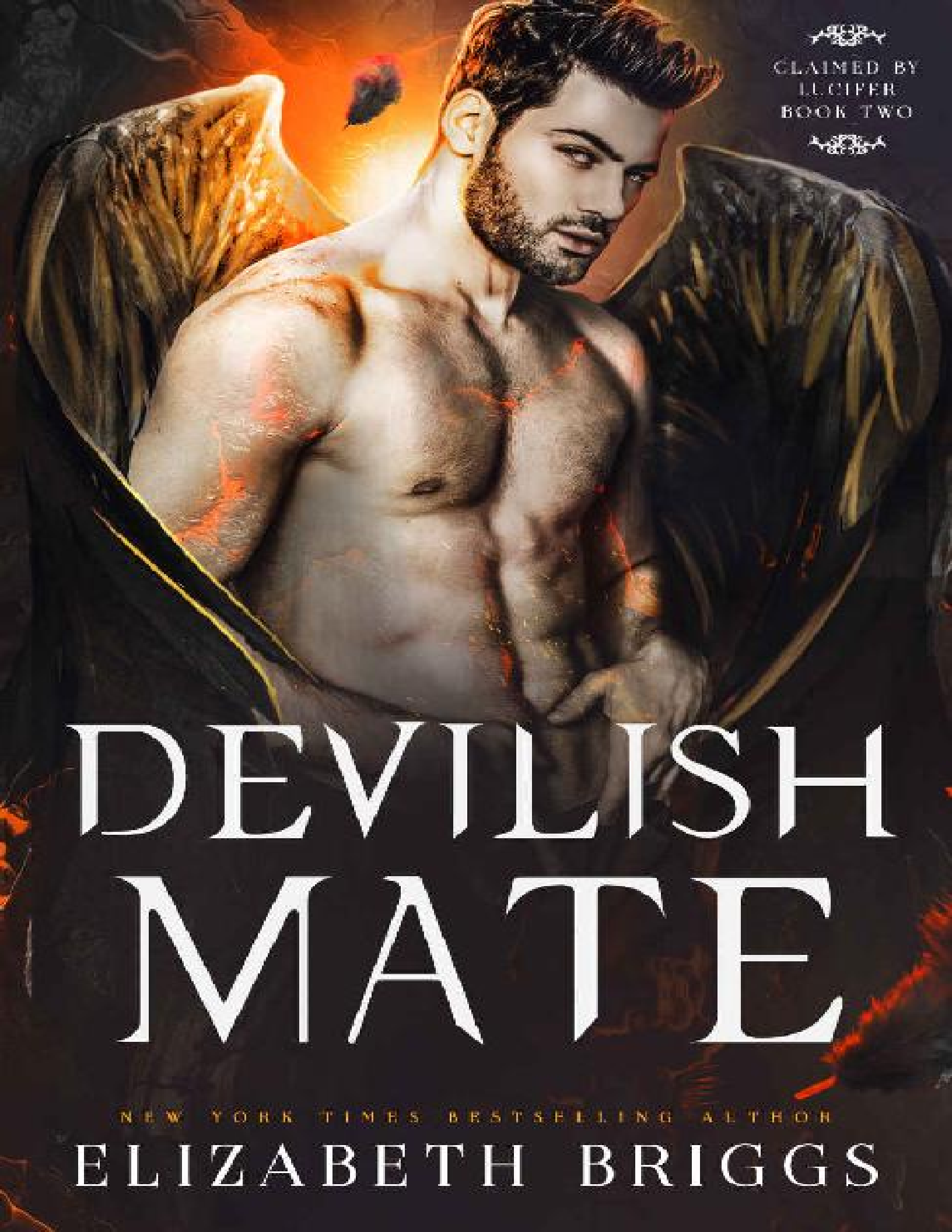




CLAIMED BY
LUCIFER
BOOK TWO

DEVILISH MATE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

ELIZABETH BRIGGS

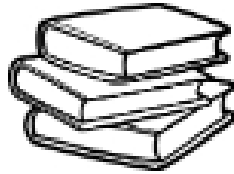
DEVILISH MATE

CLAIMED BY LUCIFER BOOK TWO

ELIZABETH BRIGGS



GET FREE BOOKS



**Sign up for
Elizabeth Briggs's
newsletter and get
free romance novels!**

Click here to get them:
www.elizabethbriggsbooks.com

CONTENTS

1. [Lucifer](#)
2. [Hannah](#)
3. [Hannah](#)
4. [Hannah](#)
5. [Lucifer](#)
6. [Hannah](#)
7. [Hannah](#)
8. [Hannah](#)
9. [Lucifer](#)
10. [Hannah](#)
11. [Hannah](#)
12. [Hannah](#)
13. [Lucifer](#)
14. [Hannah](#)
15. [Hannah](#)
16. [Lucifer](#)
17. [Hannah](#)
18. [Hannah](#)
19. [Lucifer](#)
20. [Hannah](#)
21. [Hannah](#)
22. [Hannah](#)
23. [Lucifer](#)
24. [Hannah](#)
25. [Lucifer](#)
26. [Hannah](#)
27. [Lucifer](#)
28. [Hannah](#)
29. [Hannah](#)
30. [Lucifer](#)
31. [Hannah](#)
32. [Hannah](#)
33. [Lucifer](#)
34. [Hannah](#)
35. [Hannah](#)

[Excerpt from Seraphim Academy 1: Wicked Wings](#)
[About the Author](#)

LUCIFER



In all my thousands of years of existence, killing my mate was the hardest thing I'd ever done.

The light faded from Hannah's eyes, along with a look of betrayal I'd never be able to forget in all my days. As her life left her, anguish gathered in my chest, growing and pressing outward until I barely held myself together.

She slumped in my arms.

Dead.

"I'm sorry." I settled her back against the leather couch and swallowed against the emotion trying to claw its way from my heart. "It was the only way."

My regretful apology wasn't enough. It would never be enough. How could I apologize for this? For killing her? Even if I did it to break the curse, with every intention of bringing her back to life, I wasn't sure my actions could ever be forgiven. Even if she forgave me, could I forgive myself?

My Hannah lay on the couch, her chest still. So still. I grazed my knuckles across her soft, pale cheeks as I watched her face and waited. The more seconds passed, the more certain I became that I'd made the wrong decision. What was taking so long?

Samael rushed in, visible in my peripheral vision. He stopped short and stilled completely as he took in the scene. I couldn't tear my gaze away from my love, the other half of my soul. *Come back to me, Hannah.*

“What have you done?” Samael asked, the horror evident in his tone.

My voice came out tight. “I had to do it to break the curse. Don’t worry, her death won’t be permanent.” But her skin grew colder under my fingertips as I stroked her jawline, trying to wake her up with the strength of my will. “I hope.”

My attention shifted from Hannah’s face when five winged people flew through the broken glass of the windows and landed in the penthouse, their feet touching the ground with barely a sound. As their wings folded shut with a snap, I breathed a sigh of relief.

Kassiel adjusted his tie and straightened his suit as he gazed at the destruction and death before him. At his side was his lover, Olivia, along with her three other mates, Bastien, Callan, and Marcus. As a half-succubus, she required four of them to keep her sated, just like her mother, Lilith. I’d called them earlier today in the hopes they could help me with this matter—and I’d only gone forward with breaking the curse once I’d seen them outside, fighting Mammon and his dragons beside my people.

I rose to my feet and faced them. “Thank you for coming with all haste.”

Kassiel strode forward with the others at his heels. “It’s fortunate we were already nearby when you called us.”

“That was quite the skirmish.” Olivia nodded toward the broken window and the skies outside where we’d all fought the dragons and gargoyles. All our enemies had fled after I’d taken out their leader, but unfortunately Gadreel—now revealed as Adam—had fled too, and taken Samael’s ancient journals with him. Something I would worry about later. All that mattered now was bringing my mate back.

Kassiel’s green eyes landed on Hannah’s prone body. “Although perhaps we were too late...”

I focused on one of Olivia’s other mates, Marcus. As an angel of the Malakim choir, he had the ability to heal, and as the son of Archangel Raphael, he also had a unique and miraculous ability. One I needed right now.

“Resurrect her,” I demanded. It wasn’t a request. It was a command, laced with power, and it resonated from the depths of my soul. Even if these angels hadn’t owed me a favor, they’d find it difficult to refuse me.

“I’ll try, but I can’t guarantee it’ll work.” The dark-haired angel walked to Hannah and examined her quickly, before glancing at me with

hesitation.

“Just do it,” I barked. I had no patience for doubt today. The longer we waited, the harder it would be to bring her back. And we had to bring her back. I would accept no other possible outcome.

Marcus rested his hands on Hannah’s chest, just under her collarbones, and a white glow surrounded her. I held my breath in anticipation. If she came back, I’d go to the ends of the Earth to keep her safe and make up for all the years of pain we’d been through. I’d do whatever it took to make her forgive me for what I’d done.

Olivia held out one hand and Marcus took it, enveloping it in his larger one. Her other mates crowded around and put their hands on her back. They all closed their eyes, sending Marcus their combined strength and energy to help him save my Hannah. My Persephone. My Eve.

My heart pounded in my ears, warring with the roaring of the wind outside the broken windows. Samael hovered nearby with a tense frown. No one moved as the white light suffused Hannah’s body, and I held my breath as I waited for the longest minute of my eternal life. Would this truly work? Or had I made the biggest mistake of all time?

Finally, Marcus removed his hands and the light faded. At first, nothing happened, and I fully expected him to tell me it was impossible.

Then Hannah sucked in a desperate, ragged breath.

Relief overwhelmed me, and I rushed forward without hesitation. I dropped to my knees beside her, ignoring the crunch of glass as it cut through my trousers. Her blue eyes fluttered open, and all the tension in my body faded away.

“Hannah,” I whispered, my hands already on her cheeks because I couldn’t go another moment without touching her. I needed to feel the warmth in her cheeks and the breath escaping her lips to believe she was truly alive again.

As her eyes focused on me, her beautiful mouth twisted, and her gaze registered confusion and horror. Fine, yes, I deserved that. We’d work on that problem later. All that mattered was that she was alive—and that the curse was broken. A sense of triumph filled my chest knowing I’d once again beaten my father at his own game.

“Just breathe,” I said in a low voice as Hannah struggled to sit up. I held out my hand, which she took with some hesitation.

But then Hannah shrunk back against the couch as if trying to get away from me. She stared at the other people in the room, her eyes wide, but her gaze kept returning to Kassiel. Understandable. I settled beside her, ready to say or do anything she needed as she came to grips with what had happened.

“Our debt is repaid now.”

Without even turning, I knew who’d spoken. The gravelly, flat voice could only belong to one person. Callan, Jophiel’s son, and Olivia’s most hard-headed mate. I turned his way with a sharp, withering look. If only he knew who Hannah truly was...

“Thank you all for your assistance,” I said, glancing between all of the people gathered around us.

“Who is she?” Kassiel asked.

Hannah jerked slightly when she heard his voice, and her hand moved to grip the arm of the couch, her knuckles whitening as she squeezed. She was freaking out and trying not to show it. Who could blame her? Being murdered by your mate and then brought back from the dead would be a lot for anyone to take in.

I rose to my feet and adjusted my poor suit, which was covered in dragon blood and devil knew what else. “We’ll speak later. For now, I need to be alone with her. Samael, can you find rooms for our guests and arrange for cleanup to begin?”

Samael nodded curtly, obviously displeased about the situation. I’m sure I’d hear about it later in great detail. “Follow me please,” he told the others, and his strides were sharp as he walked away. Kassiel gave Hannah one last curious glance before following Samael and the others out of the penthouse.

As soon as they were gone, I turned back to Hannah to offer her comfort and perhaps a glass of water. Her eyes locked onto me and she suddenly burst into movement, jumping to her feet, her face twisting with rage, her blond hair flowing behind her.

“You killed me.” Her chest heaved as her eyes blazed. “You killed me!”

“Hannah...” I stepped forward to take her into my arms and reassure her, but she stumbled back and held up her hands to stop me.

“Stay away! Don’t come any closer!” The color drained from her face, and she brought her hand to her throat. Clutching it gently, as if

remembering.

I sighed, wishing I could take that memory away, the memory of my squeezing her neck until life left her. “Hannah, let me explain. Killing you was the only way to break the curse, but I had a plan all along. I called in a favor with the angels and had Marcus resurrect you. He’s the son of Archangel Raphael and, like his father, he can bring people back from the dead.”

Hannah reared backward, her eyes wide. “Were you certain it would work?”

“No, but I had faith.”

“You had faith?” She grabbed a vase, one of the few breakable things in the room that had survived the battle unscathed, and hurled it across the room. “I might have died!” she screamed. “Fuck you. I did die!”

As the vase hit the ground and shattered, I stayed calm, trying not to do or say anything that would add to Hannah’s distress. “Yes.”

She stopped and stared at me, more shock blooming across her face, if that was possible. “And this time I wouldn’t be reborn.”

“Yes.”

She picked up a wine glass and threw it toward me. “You could have told me that was your plan first!”

I lifted my hand and caught the glass just in time. “I couldn’t warn you. Believe me, I wanted to tell you everything, but I couldn’t. It had to be an act of passion, done with my own hands, and you had to look at me and know I was killing you. My father made that very clear when he cursed us. If you’d known my full plan, it might not have worked. I couldn’t risk that. Even if we have to live with the memory for the rest of our days.”

She held up a hand to her head, as if in pain. “Why now? If you knew how to break the curse all along, why wait til now?”

“Because until recently I had no way to bring you back.” I set the wine glass down and braced for more flying objects. “About a year ago I helped some angels—the ones who just left—escape from prison, placing them in my debt. I couldn’t have brought you back and cheated Death without their help.”

Hannah sucked in a shuddering breath before she spoke. “Is the curse broken then?”

“I believe so, yes.” I’d felt it when she died. Like a rubber band snapping in half deep inside me.

“So if I die, that’s really the end of me?” She looked lost as she said the words.

“As it is for all living things.” I spread my hands and cocked my head, unsure of how to respond. She’d wanted to break the curse as much as I had, if not even more. I’d done it for her, after all. For *us*. “We must all face our demise at some point. At least now we can face it together.”

“No, no, no...” she muttered to herself, as she backed away from me, shaking her head. She grabbed her head with her hands as agony claimed her face. “It’s too much... I can’t...”

I rushed forward as she bent over and cried out, but then she held up one hand while her other arm clutched her waist.

“Stay away from me!” she screamed.

Golden light shot out of her skin, illuminating the room and knocking me back. As I stumbled and threw up a hand to shield my eyes from the light, Hannah ran toward the broken windows. She charged right through the jagged holes before leaping off the balcony into the night without a backward glance.

I hurried toward the railing and gripped it tightly, watching as Hannah flew away on silver wings.

HANNAH



I was flying. On my own wings. How was that possible?

I'd been overwhelmed by the knowledge of my own death at Lucifer's hands, the thousands of snippets of memories crowding my brain, and this rush of power inside me that I couldn't control. In my panic to escape it all, I'd run toward the penthouse balcony. Some instinct had made me jump off, but I didn't fall. No—I'd done the opposite of falling. *Flying*. And only when I was soaring through the night sky did I realize I was gliding on silver wings.

My wings.

The wind ruffled through my feathers as I swooped on air currents without any thought, and I marveled at the feeling of freedom and power. It was enough to calm me for a few seconds, and I allowed myself to exist in that brief moment. It felt...right. Familiar. Natural.

But then the memories flooded back and filled me with anguish and pain. I'd *died*. At Lucifer's hand. My own mate had killed me! Sure, he had a reason for it, but he should have told me about his plans first. Or given me some kind of warning. *Something*. Even if I could forgive him, which I wasn't sure was possible, I'd never be able to forget the feel of his own hands suffocating me to death.

Anger and agony filled me at the thought, and golden light shot out of my skin again, lighting up the night sky as if I'd turned into a star. Power pounded through me, and then a rush of memories that were not my own overloaded my brain. *Flying through the darkness of Hell on black wings*.

Running barefoot through a vibrant garden and laughing. Looking up at Gadreel as he yanked out the spear from my chest. Holding a small naked baby boy in my arms.

I shook my head as I tried to bury the memories deep inside me and find my way back to the present. Lucifer's horrible act had unlocked something within me, and now I didn't know who I was anymore. If Hannah had died, then was I Eve? Lenore? Someone else with wings—an angel?

Flying was the only thing that made sense to me, that my body somehow knew how to do instinctively, so I kept moving, pumping my wings to rise higher and go farther. Every time a new question or memory popped into my head, I flew harder and faster, outrunning my panic, unable to stop and succumb to my thoughts.

A figure made of darkness itself suddenly flew in front of me and then coalesced into the form of my mate. Lucifer's shadowy black wings spread out behind him as he blocked my path, looking devilishly handsome with his dark hair blowing in the wind and his green eyes bright with worry. My heart panged at the sight of him, both with love and with pain.

"Hannah, stop!" He took my hand in his, but I yanked it away.

"I can't!" I cried out, as I swooped away from him. "What the hell is happening to me? Who am I?"

"I can explain everything if you come back to the penthouse with me." He sounded so calm and reasonable, and that only made me more angry. How could he be calm when everything inside me had imploded?

"I'm not going anywhere with you!" I said with an angry flap of my wings, sending silvery streaks of light through the night air. "If you have an explanation, tell it to me right here, right now."

Lucifer let out a long sigh before he spoke, his words slow and deliberate. "You're an angel named Haniel. Your powers and memories were taken from you by your sister, Jophiel, for your protection. My memories of you were taken too, and I only got them back on Halloween."

Haniel. An angel. Yes, that made sense. But the rest... The pain in my chest flared. "Jophiel did this to me? How?"

Darkness trailed off his wings, making him blend into the night. "She had your best interests at heart, I believe, but that doesn't excuse what she did—to either of us. I'm still processing all of the returned memories

myself. I hoped your resurrection would restore you to your full self, but it seems it only restored your powers.”

My full self? An hour ago I’d been human—or so I’d thought. Now I’d died and been reborn, and discovered I was actually a freaking angel. Except I was also all of these other people from my past lives also. It was enough to make me want to scream.

“How do I get the memories back?” I asked, my voice shaking.

“You’ll have to make Jophiel return them, as I did.” A villainous smile teased his lips. “She didn’t want to do it, but I can be quite persuasive.”

I pressed my palms against my face, filled with so many emotions, powers, and memories I felt like I might explode. Now I’d learned my own sister had betrayed me too? And taken not only my memories but my powers? No. It was too much. I already had hundreds of past lives vying for attention inside of me, and I didn’t know who I was anymore. Was Hannah even real? Who was Haniel?

I had to find the truth about who I was as Haniel. I knew that, deep in my core, even if I couldn’t explain why.

I lowered my hands and took a deep breath. “I need to see my sister.”

“Of course. But before you go, I will warn you that you may not want those memories back.” Lucifer’s mouth twisted and he looked away. “The truth of what happened might be too painful to bear. Even now I wonder if I was better off not knowing.”

“I have to know. No matter how bad it is.” I crossed my arms, using my wings to keep me alight. “And really, can it be any worse than being killed by my own mate?”

Lucifer gazed up at the heavens. “Will I pay for that crime for the next century?”

“At the very least!”

His voice lowered as his eyes landed on me again. “Don’t forget I did it for you. For *us*.”

I let out a long breath. “I understand why you killed me, but that doesn’t mean I’m okay with it. I’m not sure how to forgive you, or how to move forward from this.”

His face darkened and he shot toward me on his black wings, until he was only a breath away. “Forgive me or not, it matters little. You’re my mate. You always have been, and you always will be.” He took my arms as he stared into my eyes with intense focus. “Even if you can’t see it now,

you'll realize in time that this had to be done. The curse had to be broken. This was the only way."

I let out a burst of golden light and used my wings to jerk back from him. "That doesn't make it okay!"

He shook his head. "You need to rest. In the morning, we'll take the private jet to visit Jophiel."

"No. I need to confront my sister, but I'm doing it alone. Besides, the last time we were all together, you and Jophiel nearly killed each other."

He pressed his lips into a tight line. "I can't let you go alone."

"You can't stop me either."

"Then take Azazel at least."

"Fine." My wings flapped slower, and I felt the weight of the evening dragging me down. "After I get some rest."

Lucifer suddenly swooped me into his arms and flew me toward the penthouse, holding me close as his shadowy wings carried us forward. I tried to protest, but was too exhausted to do anything but glare up at him. My traitorous body wanted to curl up against him, and my heart beat faster at being pressed close against his hard chest. My brain might be screaming that it was all wrong, but the rest of me wanted to savor every second in his arms. Lucifer was right—he was my mate, and no matter how angry I was, I'd never be able to escape that fact.

As soon as he set me down in the penthouse, I turned from him and ran, my shoes crunching on broken glass from the earlier fight. I couldn't spend another second with Lucifer and all my conflicting emotions. I headed straight to the guest room where I'd been staying, and it was a relief to find it untouched from the battle that had raged earlier.

I closed the door and leaned back against it, feeling out of breath and shaken to my core. My knees were weak, and my mind almost demanded I give in to my panic, but my newfound powers were draining me fast. Or maybe it was dying and coming back to life—I imagined that would really take it out of a person. I collapsed on the bed, my limbs weak and useless, and the sweet relief of sleep took me quickly.

But I didn't sleep for long.

Four hours after I'd gone to bed, when everything was deathly quiet in the penthouse, I shoved some clothes into a duffle bag. Enough for a few nights. Maybe more. Maybe forever.

Then I slipped out of the penthouse. Alone.

HANNAH



No one stopped me on my way out of the penthouse, or down the long elevator ride to the lowest level of the garage in The Celestial Resort and Casino. Why would they? Everyone who worked in Lucifer's hotel knew I was his woman. They had no idea of the turmoil inside me at the thought of being his mate for the rest of my life. My only life now, thanks to Lucifer breaking the curse.

I headed through the private area of the parking garage, where Lucifer kept all his expensive sports cars, toward the yellow Lamborghini I'd borrowed (aka stolen) from my sister Jophiel yesterday. I wasn't looking forward to another long drive back to San Francisco, but I also needed to speak to her immediately—and without Lucifer present.

A sharp footstep behind me made me jump and spin around, my wings flaring out behind me and a bright glow emanating from my skin. Azazel stood before me, her long hair framing her muscular shoulders, her dark skin gleaming under the light I was radiating. She was dressed for combat in black leather with her daggers strapped on, and she stared at me with open hostility. "What fresh hell is this?"

"I'm leaving." I gripped my bag tighter. "You can't stop me."

"Not that. Your wings." Zel gestured at them with blood-red nails, and when she spoke her voice dripped with disgust. "You're an *angel* now?"

I looked over my shoulder at the silvery feathers, and then with some effort managed to make them vanish, along with the glowing light. Damn these powers. I still wasn't sure how to control them.

“It appears so,” I muttered. “Trust me, I’m just as shocked as you are.”

Her dark eyes narrowed. “How? Lucifer would’ve noticed if you were an angel. We all would have noticed.”

I let out a long sigh. “I don’t know. All this time I thought I was human too. That’s why I’m leaving—to get answers. Lucifer says my sister Jophiel hid my powers and my memories from me, and I’m going to confront her now.” I stared back at Zel. “Is this going to be a problem for you?”

“I have no love for angels.” She sounded like she was speaking through gritted teeth. “But I swore to protect you, and that hasn’t changed. I failed once, and that won’t happen again—even if you are an angel.” She curled her lip when she said the last word.

I fought off a pang of disappointment that a pair of silver wings could change so much between us. “I’ll gladly accept your protection, but I could really use a friend,” I confessed.

“I don’t make friends with angels.” Zel stalked toward the yellow convertible. “Is this our ride? Not bad. I’ll drive. We all know angels are useless after dark, and you look like you’re about to fall asleep standing up.”

She wasn’t wrong. I tossed her the keys with a yawn. “Thanks.”

“Where to, little mortal?” She threw open the car door and then paused. “Hmm, I suppose I can’t call you that anymore.”

I opened the small trunk and threw my bag inside. “San Francisco.”

“Long drive.” She slid into the driver’s seat. “We’ll switch once the sun comes up.”

I nodded as I sank into the leather seat on the passenger side. As she started up the car and drove us out of the parking structure, I wadded up my jacket as best I could to make a pillow, then leaned against the door of the car and closed my eyes. Four hours was definitely not enough sleep after what happened last night, but I had to find answers.

Yet as I closed my eyes and willed myself to get some rest, sleep proved elusive. My thoughts were too wild and chaotic, too full of questions that had no answers and memories that only brought pain. I could barely grasp my head around the fact that I was an angel now, that I’d died and been reborn again, and that everything I thought I’d known about my life so far was wrong.

I'd only been away from home for a little over a week, but already my flower shop seemed like a distant memory. In that short time, I'd learned about the supernatural world and that I was part of it. First I'd learned I was Lucifer's mate, cursed to die and be reborn in an endless cycle. I was Eve, and Persephone, and Lenore, and many others whose names had long been lost. But now I'd also learned I was an angel. Not Hannah. *Haniel*. My entire identity had been swept away and replaced in a matter of days.

And Lucifer had killed me.

Maybe for good reason, but not with enough surety that I'd be resurrected. Not nearly enough. He had assumed the angels could bring me back, but what if it had failed? I should have been given a choice in the matter at least, but he took that away from me. He made the decision to break the curse on his own, acting like the big arrogant king he was, and now we both had to live with his terrible crime for the rest of our lives. Our *immortal* lives.

As an angel, I wouldn't age. That was a huge shock right there. Of course, with the curse broken—if it really was broken—this was also my last life. I thought I'd feel relieved about that, and yet it sent a trickle of fear down my spine. If Gadreel—who we now knew was Adam reincarnated—killed me again, that would be it for me. A final death.

Of course, with the curse broken it also meant we could kill him too. For good this time.

I sure as hell hoped he could be killed anyway. I had memories flickering in my head of Adam in numerous incarnations, and all the times he'd murdered me. Even in lives Lucifer never knew about, where Adam found me as a child. I shuddered especially hard at those memories and all the wretched, disgusting things he'd done. That monster had to be stopped.

I had no idea where he was now though. He'd taken off after stealing Samael's ancient journals from Lucifer, which sounded like it was going to be a problem, though I wasn't sure how exactly. I shoved the missing journals out of my mind—I'd leave that one to Lucifer. I had more immediate problems to deal with. Like confronting my sister and figuring out who the fuck I was.

Adam would find me eventually though. He always did. But this time I would be ready for him.

While Zel cruised down the freeway at breakneck speed, I adjusted my makeshift pillow and tried to get comfortable. Lamborghinis were sexy

little cars, but not exactly designed for one to sleep inside. Not that the car was the real problem. No, the problem was that I couldn't get my mind to turn off. Over and over the moment of my death played through my head on repeat, like a bad horror movie I couldn't turn off. Sometimes other images broke through from my past lives, just to fuel my anxiety. Some were memories of other times I'd fought with Lucifer in the past, like my brain couldn't help but drag up the worst things to torment me with.

Dammit. Focusing on the past wouldn't help me get answers now. I forced myself not to care about Lucifer, not to even think about him. I focused on slowing my breathing in an attempt to calm down. I wouldn't achieve anything by allowing my frustration to overtake me. And what I needed more than anything was rest.

Sleep sank its claws into me eventually, but just before it claimed me completely, another face flickered in my mind of one of the men who'd been there tonight when I'd been resurrected. Dark hair. Green eyes. Lucifer's smile. I'd seen him at the Devil's Night Ball too. My heart clenched at the thought, and something about him spoke to me on an almost cellular level. He was important to me somehow, but I had no idea why. The memories were too tangled, and they wouldn't obey my commands yet. They came and went as they pleased, even as I sought desperately for one involving this man.

Finally, a name came to me as I succumbed to sleep. *Kassiel*.

Who was he?

After the sun rose, Zel woke me up by shoving my arm, hard. I yawned and took over in the driver's seat, while Zel immediately fell asleep beside me. I envied her for that. I'd always been a terrible sleeper, plagued by what I now knew were flashes from my past lives. The only time I'd ever slept well was when Lucifer was by my side. I shoved that thought away before the anxiety came back.

As I drove, the sun hit me through the windows and filled me with warmth and strength, and eventually we made it to San Francisco. I found my way easily to my sister's house, as if I'd always known the path, and someone buzzed us past the gate. I parked in front of her two-story

mansion that looked like a French chateau, which sat on top of a hill with amazing views of the bay. Everything inside and out was white and beige, although at least the outside had a few touches of color from some pink roses.

Zel made a sound of disgust as we got out of the car. I ignored her as I made my way to the door, which opened before I reached it. Jophiel stood on the other side with a smile, her straight blond hair gleaming in the sunlight. She wore a white suit with a skirt and a pink shirt, and every inch of her was far too perfect to be human.

She came forward on her white heels and took both my hands in hers. "Hannah! I was worried when you took the car, but I'm so glad you've returned. Did you realize I was right about Lucifer all along?"

I jerked my hands away and bit my tongue. I wasn't sure how to answer that. Instead, I met her eyes and said, "I'm here for answers."

"Answers?" my sister asked, cocking her head as if she was the picture of innocence.

"About my life." I swallowed against the anxiety making my throat tight. "About Haniel."

I had the satisfaction of seeing Jophiel's face pale at that name. Her fingers splayed at the base of her throat, and if she'd been wearing pearls, she probably would've clutched them. "Lucifer told you. I knew I should never have given him back those memories."

"Don't blame Lucifer for this one." With some effort I made my wings flare out behind me, making Jophiel's eyes widen. "He had to tell me when these things sprouted from my back."

"Shit," she said, dropping the innocent act entirely.

An angry bright glow surrounded me. "My powers have returned. I want my memories back too, along with an explanation. And it had better be a damn good one."

Jophiel nodded slowly and gestured toward her front door. "Come inside."

HANNAH



I hid my wings and stepped inside Jophiel's entryway, but she held up a hand when Azazel tried to follow me.

"The demon isn't welcome in my house," Jophiel said.

"Fallen," Zel snapped. "And I go where she goes."

"Azazel is my bodyguard," I explained.

"You don't need protection here," my sister replied curtly.

"I'm not so sure of that," I muttered. "But we can do this out on the porch if you'd prefer. I don't care either way."

Jophiel let out a sniff, but then stepped back to allow Zel to enter the house. If I'd thought Zel was sneering before, it was nothing compared to the look on her face as she walked inside and saw the white marble floors, gleaming chandelier, and sweeping staircase. I'll admit, it was a bit much, but it wasn't like Lucifer's penthouse was much better.

My sister led us into her living room, which was spotless and shining, as it had been every time I'd visited. We passed the display of angel figurines, which Zel eyed with distaste before plopping down on the white couch.

Jophiel's lips pressed in a tight line as she watched Zel, like she worried the Fallen might drop dirt on her pristine white furniture. Then Jophiel turned her eyes back to me and gave me a thorough examination. "Are you all right? Has something happened with Lucifer?"

The concern in her voice broke through my anger and impatience, reminding me that she cared about me, at least enough to notice when

something was wrong. But how could I respond to that question? If I told her everything that had gone down in the last twenty-four hours she'd give me an "I told you so" speech, and no one in the history of the world wanted that from their older sister. I also wasn't sure how much Zel knew about my death and rebirth. And frankly, I just didn't want to talk about it right now.

"I had a rough night," I managed to say. "Adam attacked me, but I fought him off and he escaped. But that's not why I'm here." My hands clenched at my side as I stared my sister down. "I need to know who I really am. You took my powers. You took my *memories*. Why? How?"

She barely reacted, except for the slight twitch of her mouth. "Please, sit down and I'll explain everything. Then you can decide if you still want your memories back. But first, allow me to get you something to drink at least. You look exhausted."

"Coffee," Zel said. "Black."

Jophiel shot her a glare before leaving the room, and I sank down into a white armchair with golden piping. I put my head in my hands and waited, trying not to let the anxiety overcome me again.

A few minutes later, my sister returned with a silver carafe of coffee and a tray of fancy-looking pastries. She poured me a coffee as she said, "Perhaps your guard can give us some privacy for this discussion. Some of it is of a sensitive nature."

At her words, another wisp of memory floated to the front of my mind. I was in a pub with wooden tables and beams across the ceiling. The smell of stale beer lingered in the air, and the raucous calls of the barmaids and customers echoed in my ears. Zel sat beside me, along with another woman with fiery red hair. They both wrapped their arms around me as we laughed and toasted to something, though the details eluded me. A warm sense of friendship and belonging surrounded me, and then the memory faded.

I shook my head to return to the present. I couldn't live like this, with half-memories making themselves known at random. This had better be a temporary side effect of my resurrection and nothing more.

I realized Jophiel and Zel were waiting for my response. I didn't know very much anymore—certainly not things I'd counted on as true only two days ago—but I knew I could trust Zel. I'd had few true friends over my many lifetimes, but she was one of them.

“Azazel stays.” My voice was firm, leaving no room for argument.

Zel smirked and poured herself a coffee, then grabbed a tiny fruit tart with powdered sugar off the pastry tray and popped it in her mouth. Jophiel offered me a pastry as well, but I shook my head. My stomach was in knots, and I had a feeling it wouldn’t get any better during this conversation.

“Tell me about Haniel,” I said.

Jophiel sat in the other armchair and crossed her legs primly. “Very well. As you probably have realized now, you are not truly Hannah, but Haniel, an angel of the Ofanim Choir, and my half-sister. You were born in the early twentieth century in Heaven to two Archangels—Anael and Phanuel, our father.”

My mouth fell open, but I was too stunned to respond. I was over a hundred years old, and born in another realm. To two Archangels. I searched my mind for any glimpses of the parents she spoke of, or of my childhood in Heaven, but those memories were gone. Not even a tiny flicker of familiarity remained. And yet, I sensed she was telling the truth. That only made it worse somehow. After spending the last few years desperately wishing I had memories of my parents, whom I’d believed were killed in the car accident that gave me amnesia, even the briefest flash of them would be a blessing.

“Go on,” I said.

“The Great War was still ongoing at that time, and together we fought against the demons, until Lucifer killed our father and kidnapped you.” She sighed and sipped her coffee before continuing. “Somehow you fell in love with him, much to my dismay. You always do.”

I sat up a little at that. “Lucifer killed our father?”

“Oh, he left that part out of his story, did he?” She shook her head. “Why am I not surprised?”

“If Lucifer killed him, I’m sure he had a good reason,” Zel growled.

“I’m sure the death of an Archangel seemed like a good enough reason at the time,” Jophiel snapped back.

I held up a hand before they started going at it. “What happened after that?”

Jophiel set down her coffee mug and met my eyes. “Eventually you returned, claiming Lucifer had let you go. As an Ofanim, I could tell you were speaking the truth, but I knew there was more to it than that. When

we were alone, you told me you'd started a secret romance with Lucifer. I was appalled, naturally, but you explained about your past lives and your mate bond with Lucifer. Since you're my sister I agreed to keep your secret, though I later regretted that since it only led to your doom when Adam killed you."

I swallowed hard, but had to ask, "How did it happen?"

"I don't know. I wasn't there at the time. You managed to escape and flew to my house, bleeding everywhere." Her face tightened and she stared into her coffee mug with pain evident in her eyes. "I called Raphael to heal you, but he didn't arrive in time to save you. However, he did manage to resurrect you."

Archangel Raphael was Marcus's father, I remembered. I'd now been resurrected by both father and son. How lucky for me. "That doesn't explain why my memories are missing."

Her voice grew urgent, her eyes pleading with me. "Everyone thought you were dead. Only Lucifer, Raphael, and I knew the truth. Knowing that your fate would only be to return to Lucifer and then be killed again by Adam, I saw an opportunity to protect you—and I took it. I wiped your memories, along with the others', and allowed everyone to believe you were another tragedy of war."

I raised my eyebrows. "And you didn't think to ask me if I wanted that?"

"I did, actually, and you agreed. The pain you felt at the time was too much to bear. You wanted to forget."

"Why? Why was it so bad?"

Jophiel looked away. "You lost more than just your life that day. I cannot say any more than that."

I glared at her, wishing she would give me answers, and annoyed at my past self for agreeing to that plan. "How long ago was this?"

"About forty years ago."

I nearly knocked over my coffee mug. "Forty years?" I practically yelled. I only remembered the last few years of my life as Hannah. Where was the rest of it?

Jophiel tried to offer me a small blueberry scone. "Dear, you should really eat something. You'll feel so much better."

I knocked the scone out of her hand. "I don't want a fucking scone! I want to know what happened during the last forty years! Where were my

wings, my powers? Who was I all that time?”

“Yes, I’d like to know also,” Zel said, and I felt grateful she was there to back me up. “Especially since even Lucifer thought she was human.”

“For all intents and purposes she *was* human,” Jophiel admitted, before turning back to me. “I took away your powers and turned you human. The only thing I left was your immortality. I couldn’t bear the thought of you growing old and dying. I didn’t want to lose you.”

“How is that possible?” I asked.

“Because she’s an Archdemon,” Zel said with obvious disdain.

Jophiel nodded. “Archangels—and Archdemons, for that matter—have a unique ability to turn angels and demons into humans, stripping them of their powers and immortality. It’s almost never done, and in fact few people know it’s even possible. In the old days the power was abused, so now we try to never use it, unless someone asks us to do so.”

I stared at my sister, my hands trembling. “Did I ask?”

“No. You simply wanted to forget. But that wasn’t enough. I couldn’t send you back out as an angel. Lucifer and Adam would find you again!” She reached for me, but I pulled back. “Don’t you see, I did this to protect you.”

“You did it against my will!” Fuck, she was just as bad as Lucifer. Both of them claiming to love me, and then making life-changing decisions without actually consulting me. I stood up and paced the room, running a jerky hand through my hair. Did anyone actually give a damn what *I* thought? Or what *I* wanted? Or did they all think they knew better than me?

“Haniel, please,” my sister said. “I only wanted you to be safe.”

“But you never asked what I wanted!” I roared, as golden light flared out of me like an explosion.

Jophiel shrank back and Zel threw up a hand to shield her eyes. I quickly got the light back under control and took a deep breath, trying to calm myself before I accidentally destroyed my sister’s house. Not that she deserved anything less. Besides, there was still more she wasn’t telling me.

“Why do I only remember the last five years of my life as Hannah?” I asked.

Jophiel smoothed her skirt. “Even though I did my best to give you a normal, human life, after a few years you figured out that something

wasn't right. I wiped your memories and started again, giving you a new identity and a new life, but it never lasted. You'd miraculously heal a wound, or realize you weren't aging, and then grow suspicious. So we'd have to do it again."

My mouth fell open and all I could do was stare at her. "How many times?"

"Seven," Jophiel said in a low voice. "I've wiped your memories seven times."

"Seven times! And each time you gave me a new life," I said, still pacing, my hands clenched tight. "Was any of it real? What about the accident with the drunk driver? That was fake, wasn't it? Just a way to easily explain away my lack of memories?"

She dropped her head. "Yes."

"And our supposed parents who died in the crash? They weren't real, were they?"

"No. They never existed. Not the ones you're thinking of anyway, although all of our parents are gone. We really are orphans."

As if that made it any better. Fury pounded behind my eyes, nearly giving me a headache. Everything I'd believed for my entire life—or as it turned out, only five years of my life—was all a lie. A story. Something Jophiel simply made up to keep me under her control like I was a child she needed to coddle.

"All this time you lied to me," I said, seething with anger. "Aren't Ofanim supposed to be the angels of truth?"

"I'm sorry, Haniel," Jophiel said in a low voice. "I only did what I thought was best."

Shock and rage unfurled in my chest, and I picked up my coffee mug and threw it at her display of angels, knocking a few of them over and splashing liquid everywhere. "No! You can't use that excuse anymore. You took my choices away. You took my *life* away." I whirled around and stalked toward her, until I stood over her, trembling with barely-contained emotion. "And now you're going to give me my memories back."

Zel jumped to her feet and moved behind me, backing me up with a growl. "Do it."

"All right, yes." Jophiel rose to her feet and lifted her chin. "But don't forget that you asked me to remove them. You didn't want these memories. Sometimes it's easier to not remember."

Lucifer had said something similar, but what could be worse than existing in a world of fleeting half-truths? If I was going to move on with the rest of my immortal life, I needed to be whole again. “Do it. I don’t care how bad the memories are.”

Jophiel pressed her lips together in a thin line, a crease marring her forehead. “You may want to sit down for this.”

I reluctantly took a seat in the white armchair, and Jophiel moved close. She rested her hand on my forehead and light filled my gaze as her palm heated. I closed my eyes and braced myself for whatever was to come.

The memories rushed in, all at once. They filled my mind with decades of life, but it was too much and too quickly. I wanted to scream, and if I was standing I surely would have fallen to my knees. As it was, I could only grip the arms of the chair tight as memories buffeted me. Things I should have known, things I never should’ve forgotten. Love. Pain. Loss.

Such incredible loss.

I clutched my stomach and cried out in anguish, as tears filled my eyes. The pain was too much, and way too raw. Pain I’d never had time to recover from, and loss I’d never had a chance to grieve. I didn’t know how to handle it, or all the other feelings surging inside me.

Maybe Lucifer and Jophiel were right. Maybe it was better not to know.

LUCIFER

When I woke, Hannah was gone. As I knew she would be. I could have stopped her. I could have gone after her. If I wanted her by my side, nothing on Earth would prevent me from getting my way. But Azazel was with her—I'd made sure of that—and I would allow Hannah to confront her sister on her own. She needed some time to think, and to recover. Then she'd return to me...or I'd drag her back here, kicking and screaming if I must.

While Hannah sought her past, I had other problems to deal with. My destroyed penthouse, for one thing. I immediately ordered it cleaned and repaired, and I knew my staff would have it looking like new within a few hours. It certainly wouldn't be the first time—even in the last week—that they'd had to restore order to the place. As they worked, I headed to my war room one floor below, searching for Samael.

As soon as I stepped into his office, Samael's face darkened, his eyebrows lowering into a glower. He stood from his seat, pacing in front of the large window that separated us from the main hub of the control room, where giant screens flashed with demon locations and global activity. My staff rushed about out there, taking phone calls and exchanging information, but Samael and I were trapped in a quiet bubble. I moved to the small bar in the corner and poured us both a whiskey, then took a seat in front of him.

We sat together for some time, the silence thick and heavy in the room. He shook his head and parted his lips like he was finally ready to speak.

Then he closed his mouth and shook his head again before glancing out of the window and clearing his throat.

"I can't understand how I missed it." He slowly swirled his whiskey around in his glass. "For over a century Gadreel deceived us. How did I miss that he was truly Adam? I was with him the most. We worked together. I trusted him!"

"He spent years earning our trust, only to betray us all," I said, my rage quietly simmering under the surface, but threatening to boil over. The rage I always felt whenever I thought of Adam.

Samael stood and poured himself another drink. "Yes, but he was my assistant. I trusted him with *everything*. And all that time he was lying to us and plotting his attack. I should have seen it. I should have stopped it."

"We all should have seen it." I'd trusted Gadreel too. He'd been at the center of many of our operations. I'd let him get close to Hannah, even left him alone with her. I shut my eyes briefly, not wanting to consider the things he could have done while he'd had my trust.

Fuck—the things he *had* done while he'd had my trust.

"He killed Lenore. And Haniel." My chest clenched with pain at the old memory, newly recovered. And the other memory of him last night, standing over Hannah, about to finish the job. "He must pay."

Samael knocked back the whiskey in one gulp. "He will."

"Find him," I ground out, my voice low and angry.

"What do you think we've been doing?" He set his empty glass down on his desk with a heavy thump. "I have all my best people looking for him, but he's proving to be elusive so far."

I downed the rest of my whiskey as well, hoping the slight burn would calm my smoldering fury. "The Archdemons must be hiding him. Mammon said Adam was working with some of the other Archdemons. They wish to overthrow me and return to Hell. Fools, all of them."

Samael poured another glass for both of us. "There will be fallout from you killing Mammon. There are so few dragons left, and you killed the oldest, most powerful one." He tipped his glass toward me in an almost salute. "Not that I blame you. He deserved it. But they might retaliate."

"If they're that stupid, let them come." I was in the mood to remind some more demons who was in charge of them.

He arched an eyebrow at me, a gentle rebuke. "Perhaps you should consider making peace with them, if you can. It would be a shame if you

had to wipe out the few remaining dragons.”

“That’s up to them. They can swear loyalty to me—or they can die.”

“That’s not our only problem,” Samael said. “Gadreel took my ancient journals, the ones that spoke of the curse, and other things from our distant past. It contains knowledge he and the Archdemons should never know—like where certain Elder Gods are sealed away.” He looked at me, his gaze full of warning. “Including your father.”

My chest tightened and fury whipped through me like fire as things started to make sense. “They must be trying to release them. The Elder Gods are the only ones who could defeat me.” It was a foolish, dangerous plan that was likely to backfire on them, but would also result in many casualties along the way.

Samael furrowed his brow. “If Adam and the Archdemons release those four, destruction will rain down upon Earth.”

My fingers tightened around my glass until it shattered. Those four Elder Gods could not be unleashed upon the world. Especially my father. “I won’t let that happen.”

“We’ll do everything in our power to stop it,” Samael said, before letting out a long, frustrated sigh. “But first I need to find a new assistant.”

I rose to my feet and adjusted my suit. “Try to find someone who isn’t plotting our destruction this time.”

HANNAH



The last thing I remembered was darkness claiming me, taking me to a place where the memories couldn't hurt me anymore. Now the sound of metal slipping against metal wormed its way into my dream, waking me from a vision of Gadreel glaring at me with eyes full of rage. I rolled over and slowly realized I was in Jophiel's luxurious guest room. Azazel sat in a chair in the corner, sharpening one of her knives.

It was dark, with no light visible through the curtains, so I must have been out a while. I sucked in a deep breath and tried not to panic as everything hit me again, returning in a wave as big as when Jophiel had released the memories into my head.

I remembered it all.

Everything.

A gleaming white house built upon a hill with many places for an angel to land. A woman with golden hair and a radiant smile taking me into her arms. A man with serious blue eyes handing me a book. Jophiel, already hundreds of years old by the time I was born, taking my hand and leading me outside into bright sunlight. All memories from my childhood in Heaven. And my parents—my real parents. I remembered them strongly, along with the pain of losing them.

My mother, Archangel Anael, had simply disappeared soon after I gained my wings at twenty-one. No one knew what happened to her, though many suspected the demons had killed her. And my father, Archangel Phanuel—Jophiel was right, Lucifer *did* kill him. What she left

out was that he'd done it in self-defense. It was during the middle of the Great War, and I was serving under my father, who commanded a group of spies. He led our team in an assassination attempt against Lucifer, but we failed. My father died in the attack, and Lucifer captured me.

At first, I hated Lucifer. I burned with the desire to strike him dead. I'd been raised my entire life to hate demons, and especially Lucifer, and then he'd killed my father. But I couldn't deny my bond with him either, and soon I came to know the real Lucifer. I also began to remember my past lives, just snippets and feelings more than anything, but it was enough. I couldn't deny the truth that he was my mate.

We began a secret, forbidden relationship, and in private we spent hours discussing the endless war between angels and demons. Slowly we each began to realize that the two sides had both lost sight of why they were even fighting by that point, and we agreed that the war was hurting both our races. Heaven and Hell had each become ravaged by the ancient battles, and the population of angels and demons were dwindling. Despite that, we couldn't see an end to the war. Neither side would concede. Pride was perhaps the greatest enemy of all.

Lucifer was the only one who could put an end to the war, and I'd tried to convince him to do just that—and for a while, I really thought he might do it, especially when we discovered I was pregnant. The first child ever created from the forbidden love between an angel and a Fallen. A perfect blend of light and darkness. A daughter.

We were overjoyed—especially since children among immortals are so rare. But the joy didn't last long.

The memories played out in my mind like a film I couldn't stop. When I was seven months pregnant, Gadreel found out about us, and he got me alone and attacked me. My thoughts faltered in a wave of pain. He hadn't only taken my life. He'd taken my unborn daughter's life too.

A sob lodged in my chest and I tried to choke it down, trying not to feel the pain that swept over me, but it was impossible. Agony wrapped around me like cold tentacles as the loss hit me all over again, binding me in unexpected raw sadness.

I couldn't stop the memories. Gadreel stabbed me, and the blood... So much blood. I managed to escape and fly again, even though the pain was unbearable. All I could think was that I had to get to my sister. She would

be able to save me and my daughter. But it was too late. I died, and though Raphael resurrected me, he couldn't save my child.

Another sob escaped me at the memory. She was gone. My daughter was gone. I still remembered the first time I felt her move inside me, and the unbearable grief when I realized I would never feel her again. The pain was as fresh now as if it had just happened.

After my resurrection, the despair had been overwhelming. I couldn't shake the belief I should have died with my daughter. I was angry, so incredibly angry that Raphael had brought me back without her. How could I go on with my life, knowing what I'd lost?

I'd begged Jophiel to wipe my memories. Begged her to kill me again. Begged her to let me start over fresh as a new person, leaving Haniel behind forever.

And in a way, she'd done just that.

The tears flowed freely now as the memories swept through me, so hard and fast I could barely breathe through them. Gasping, I clutched my chest as true despair radiated through me, so strong I could barely stand it. My daughter was an innocent victim of the curse, and I would give anything to trade places with her, to give up my life so she could live.

I felt so helpless. So alone. I understood now why Lucifer told me I might not want to know.

Zel sank down beside me on the bed and wrapped her arms around me without a word, enveloping me in a tight hug. I was so surprised by the gesture, especially since Zel had no idea why I was upset, that at first I nearly jerked away from her touch. Then I leaned into her, pressed my face against her shoulder, and cried against her.

She held me the entire time, offering me silent, strong comfort. She didn't ask me to explain. She didn't tell me it would be okay. She simply allowed me to find my way through the grief while showing me I wasn't alone in it. Like a true friend.

Eventually, I tried to talk, a garbled stream of consciousness punctuated by sobs and uncoordinated inhaleds and gasps. "It hurts too bad. I—I wish I'd never remembered. Why did I have to know so badly? I should have listened. I should have let the past die..."

Zel pushed back enough to look me in the eyes. "No. It's better that you know, even if the memories are painful. I know you believe this.

You're an Ofanim. Truth is everything to your kind. No matter how hard it is to bear it."

I hated her at that moment because she was right. I'd never be satisfied without the truth. But even accepting that, I didn't know how to stop the overwhelming tide of agony. All I could do was let it wash over me, burying my face as I let more tears fall. It was pointless trying to hold them back. I surrendered and let the grief take me away, because I didn't know how to bring it to an end any other way.

At some point, I fell asleep and didn't wake until sunlight brightened the day outside, shining through the windows. This time when I opened my eyes, it was my sister sitting beside me. She stroked my head like a mother looking after her child, and that only made my chest tighten up again.

"Do you understand now?" she asked. "Why I had to do it?"

Her questions and her tone instantly put me on edge. I sat up and stared at her, feeling hollow inside. "I asked you to do it."

"Yes," she said with a sigh of relief. "I'm so sorry. I wish you never had to remember any of it."

I shook my head as more memories returned, this time of my life after my resurrection—as a human. Living fake lives in different cities, oblivious to my true self, believing all the lies my sister told me about who I was. Jophiel always kept me close to her, in towns big enough that people wouldn't notice me much, but small enough that I wouldn't be easily found. But I inevitably uncovered something that made me question everything about myself, and then she would swoop in again. Over and over she gave me a new life and a new identity, wiping my brain so many times I'm surprised I didn't have permanent damage from it. And any new friends or connections I'd made in that time? Any interests or accomplishments I'd achieved? All the places I came to call home? Gone. Forever.

Yes, I'd asked to forget. Yes, I'd asked to die and be reborn again. But I hadn't asked for *that*.

My voice was hoarse and my throat scratchy as I said, "What you did was unforgivable."

"I only did what you asked me to do," she said, and the look she gave me was exasperated rather than apologetic. "I was *trying* to help you."

"You were trying to control me." I threw off the covers and got out of bed, needing space from her. "You took away my ability to have a real life. With friends. With family. With a home or a career or anything of my own."

"I know it seems extreme, but I also kept you alive and safe for forty years. If you'd gone back to living as Haniel, Adam would have killed you again." Her tone was so reasonable, and that only upset me even more.

"You took *everything* from me. My memories, my power, my identity..." My heart twisted. "And my mate."

"You asked me to take away the pain, and that's what I did. You must remember now how distraught you were. I only wanted to help you get through the grief." A flicker of pain marred Jophiel's perfect features for a moment. "I understand the loss of a child. I know how it breaks you. You might remember that I lost a daughter too once, before you were even born. More recently, my son, Ekariel, was taken from me when he was a child. For years I believed he was dead, but a few months ago he was rescued from a cult, yet that didn't erase the suffering I endured all that time. There's nothing as painful as losing a child. I didn't want you to have to go through that too."

"When I asked you to wipe my memories, I wasn't in my right mind," I said, as tears slipped my eyes again at the reminder of my loss. "For fuck's sake, I asked you to kill me too! You should have comforted me and given me time to grieve with Lucifer over our loss, instead of trying to fix the problem by taking everything away from me!"

She reached for me, but I sidestepped her touch. "You're my little sister. If you're in pain, I'll do whatever I can to fix that."

"But you turned my life into a lie! I don't even know who I am anymore!" Fury and despair pounded through me, throbbing in my head, filling me until I couldn't contain it anymore. My wings burst from my back, and golden light shot out of me, knocking over a lamp behind me and throwing the bedsheets back.

Jophiel stood, one hand outstretched like she was trying to stop me from doing something rash. "Haniel, please. I know this is a lot to take in.

But you must stay calm.”

I was about to tell her to shove calm up her ass, when Azazel ran into the room, her daggers out—one gleaming with white light, the other seething with darkness.

“What was that?” Zel asked, scanning the room for any apparent threat.

“Her powers are coming back too quickly,” Jophiel said, before turning to me with urgency in her voice. “You need training to control them, or you’ll hurt someone.”

“I’ll take care of it,” Zel said, her eyes never leaving my face even as she addressed Jo.

“This is only something an *angel* can help with,” Jophiel replied in a frosty tone.

“I *was* an angel,” Zel snapped. “Once.”

“That was thousands of years ago!”

“Enough,” I yelled, holding up my glowing hands. I couldn’t seem to make them stop.

“Stay with me,” Jophiel said. “I will help you regain control of your powers and remind you about your angelic side. You’re the daughter of two Archangels. You belong with us—not with the demons.”

“No. I don’t.” I stared at my sister, who’d lied to me so many times and stolen so much from me. If Lucifer hadn’t killed me, I’d still be a clueless human with my powers locked away. I wasn’t sure where I belonged, but it wasn’t with her. It wasn’t with Lucifer either though. Not after what he’d done.

The two people who claimed to love me the most had hurt and betrayed me, all supposedly to protect me. They’d left me broken. Shattered. Alone.

Well, not entirely alone. Zel stood beside me, even knowing what I was. And Brandy, back in Vista—she’d always been a loyal friend. My heart clenched thinking about her. She was my real sister, and she was the one I needed now. Maybe with Zel she’d find a way to put me back together again.

I went into the bathroom and cleaned myself up, changing into fresh clothes, and then headed back out. Zel and Jophiel were still there in the guest room, glaring at each other. I grabbed the rest of my things.

“We’re leaving,” I said to Jophiel. “And we’re taking your car. Don’t try to follow us.”

“No, you can’t go,” Jophiel started, but I brushed past her without listening and headed for the door. Would I ever be able to forgive my sister? I wasn’t sure. But it definitely wasn’t happening today.

As we headed outside, Zel grabbed the keys. “Where are we going?”

“To Vista.” I drew in a deep, shuddering breath. “Back to Hannah’s life.”

HANNAH



The drive took nearly all day, and I spent a good bit of it telling everything to Azazel, detailing all of Lucifer and Jophiel's crimes. She listened to everything without complaint, and weathered all of my crying without making me feel any less for it. When I was done, she simply said, "That's some messed up shit," and the brutal truth of it actually made me laugh through the tears. Messed up shit indeed.

I was comforted by the thought of seeing Brandy again, and when we pulled up outside the sand-colored ranch house she owned, relief settled over me. It all looked the same as when I'd last seen it. So familiar. So simple. I was a different person now than when I'd left—many people, really, and holding far too many memories—but I craved this return to my normal, ordinary life.

"Hannah!" Brandy yelled, after throwing open the front door. She must've seen the Lamborghini pull up. It wasn't exactly subtle in a quiet suburban neighborhood like this one.

I jumped out of the car and met her halfway across the yard. She wrapped me in her arms and I breathed in, so happy to be home I nearly started crying again. At least Brandy was still my friend. Something constant in a world that had turned completely upside down.

"I'm so happy to see you," she said, as she pulled back to look at me. I stared at her too, trying to suss out how she was doing ever since returning home from her ordeal. Her kidnapping in Las Vegas had started all of this, but surprisingly she looked better than ever. Her dark skin glowed, her

brown eyes danced, and her curly hair gleamed. I could only imagine what a wreck I must look like in return.

She looked over my shoulder, her gaze resting on Zel. The Fallen had stepped out of the car, looking dark and dangerous, though luckily her knives were hidden.

I gestured back at my companion. "This is Zel, my...friend."

"Nice to meet you," Brandy said, then grabbed my hand. "Come inside so we can catch up. I want to hear everything that happened after you went back to Vegas."

That seemed like a lifetime ago, even though it had only been a few days. I tried not to think about that as we walked in and I glanced around the familiar living room with its cozy furniture. Brandy's son, Jack, was sitting on the gray couch, playing video games with Asmodeus, who I recognized instantly. Not only from the brief time I'd met him in Vegas, but from before that. All the times I'd known him during my past lives flickered through my head, threatening to overwhelm me. I rested my fingertips on my forehead as I sucked in a quick deep breath and shoved the memories back down.

"Hello, my queen," Asmodeus said with a dashing smile, and I tried not to cringe at the reminder of who I was. With dark hair, bronze skin, and the facial structure of a god, he was still incredibly hot but...something was missing. He seemed different. Dialed down somehow.

I was surprised to see him here, especially in such a casual position. Asmodeus was an ancient, powerful incubus, and though he'd obviously developed feelings for Brandy while they were both held captive together, it was impossible for them to be together. As demons of lust and sexual energy, Lilim could only sleep with a human once without killing them. Yet somehow he was here, playing video games with Brandy's son like it was a normal thing for an incubus to do.

His mouth opened like he might say something more, but instead he grunted as Jack squealed and leaped off the couch, throwing his game controller in Asmodeus's lap on the way.

"Hannah!" Jack ran the last few steps to me, his arms out before he caught me around my waist, barreling into me and nearly knocking me over with his exuberance. He was sticky, I could tell without even touching him, but I didn't care. My heart swelled as I held him close.

“Did I hear Hannah?” I turned at the familiar voice as Brandy’s mom, Donna, walked in, her lips forming a gentle smile. “Oh, my sweet girl. Thank you for saving my daughter.”

Donna had once been a bigger woman before cancer ravaged her, but she still gave big hugs. In her arms I inhaled her familiar strong perfume, and a fresh wave of emotion threatened to overwhelm me. These people were genuinely happy to see me, and I’d missed them too. I regretted that everything had changed so much since I was last here.

But then I remembered they were happy to see *Hannah*. Was I even Hannah anymore? Was I perpetuating a lie by coming here?

“Let me take Jack outside for a bit before dinner,” Donna said, grabbing the boy’s hand. “I’ll let you kids talk.”

“What happened to you?” Zel asked Asmodeus once they were gone, her words abrupt and to the point—and confirmation I wasn’t the only one who’d noticed he seemed like a lesser version of his usual self.

He looked down at himself and shrugged like the next words were no big deal. “I asked my mother to make me mortal so I could be with Brandy. As Archdemon of the Lilim, she alone has that power over our kind.”

Zel snorted and gave me a look, her eyebrow raised as high as I’d ever seen it. “Lots of that going around it seems.”

Oh. My chest tightened. It was the same thing Jophiel had done to me. The difference was that he’d requested it, whereas it had been done to me unknowingly.

“That’s a big sacrifice to make,” I said, and now I understood why Brandy looked so radiant. What an amazing act of love. He gave up everything to be with her. Just like that.

“But you’re going to grow old and die now,” Zel said, sounding horrified.

“Yes.” Asmodeus took Brandy’s hand and seemed excited by the idea. “I’ve had plenty of immortality, and it was time for a change. I just hope she’ll still want me when I’m old and gray.”

Brandy looked at Asmodeus, her brown eyes full of warmth and love. “It’s more likely he won’t want me when I’m old, and will regret giving up his immortality and powers.”

He reached up to cup her face, gazing into her eyes. “I’d never feel that way. I couldn’t.”

The truth of his words ricocheted within me. Even as a human I'd always had this gut instinct about truth and knew I was a good judge of character, but now I realized that was my Ofanim powers all along. Now they'd returned in full force, and Asmodeus's truth was strong and pure, like a shining light inside him.

"I'm so happy for you both," I said with a faint smile. And I was, even if I was concealing shock that Asmodeus was willing to give up so much after knowing Brandy for such a short time. But I supposed when you met your fated mate, there was little that could stop you from wanting to be with them. I felt that unbreakable bond with Lucifer even now, hundreds of miles away, no matter how upset I was with him.

Zel plopped on the couch beside Asmodeus. "Mad Green Zombie? I love that game. What level are you on?"

Brandy rolled her eyes at another gamer in the house and looked at me. "Hungry?"

"I could eat." We'd stopped for lunch briefly during our long drive, but with everything else going on in my head and the turmoil of my emotions, food had seemed like the smallest of worries.

We walked into the kitchen to find Donna had taken Jack outside into the yard, where he was riding his bike around in circles. I watched him out of the window for a moment with a pang in my chest. I'd missed this. But I knew I didn't belong here either.

Brandy began getting some things out of the fridge as she talked. "I've got lasagna in the oven. Good thing I made a big one. Should be about fifteen minutes. Enough time for you to tell me what's been going on...and why you're here instead of with Lucifer."

I sighed and shook my head as I registered her implied question. How could I answer her? My entire life had been upheaved in the last few days. I didn't even know how to begin—and wasn't sure I wanted to drag Brandy back into this dark world with me. Not now that she had gotten out of it with Asmodeus and had a chance at a happy ending. But there were definitely things I needed to tell her. Truths I couldn't keep hidden.

"I had to get away for a while," I finally said. "I needed to get back to my normal life, and wanted to see you."

She threw some lettuce in a large bowl, then grabbed some croutons. "I'm really glad to see you, but I can tell something's up with you. Spill it."

“I found out something about myself, something that’s changed everything.” I sucked in a breath and positioned myself in the center of the kitchen so I didn’t knock anything over, before spreading my wings. “I’m an angel.”

“Oh shit!” She dropped the salad dressing she was about to open, and the plastic bottle bounced on the floor. “You have wings! Like actual wings!”

Crap. I probably should have given her some more warning before letting the wings out. “Yeah, I do. Turns out my name is really Haniel, and the reason I couldn’t remember my past was because Jophiel kept it from me, along with my powers. But now that’s over.”

“I always hated your sister,” Brandy muttered. “Can I touch them?”

I nodded, and she lightly ran her fingers over the silver feathers. It sent a weird tingle through me and felt way too intimate, but I kept myself from squirming at her touch.

“Holy shit. An angel.” She gazed upon my wings with such reverence, it made me feel self-conscious, and I quickly tucked them away again.

“I hope this doesn’t change anything between us. I know my whole life as Hannah was a lie, but...”

“No way. You’re still my best friend. Sure, you didn’t remember who you were for a while, but so what? Our friendship was never fake. Everything we had was real.”

Warmth filled my chest as relief settled over my shoulders. “Thank you, Brandy.”

“Of course.” She wrapped me in a tight hug. “Now what’s going on with Lucifer?”

My back stiffened at his name and the rush of emotions that came with it. “It’s...complicated. We’ve had a bit of a falling out. Hence why I needed to get away.”

“Well, I’ll help you however I can,” Brandy said, as she went back to making the salad. “If you need to crash here for a while, that’s fine. Technically you still live here anyway. Your friend Zel can take the couch.”

“I’m not sure what we’re going to do. I have a lot to think about. But thank you for the offer.”

She nodded and waved me away. “Dinner will be ready soon. Why don’t you go to your room and take a minute to clean yourself up? I love

you girl, but you look like a hot mess.”

Her brutal honesty made me laugh, and I looked down at myself and realized she was right. After two days on the road and a lot of crying along the way—and no showers either—I could really use some freshening up.

I headed up the stairs toward my room, except once I stepped inside, it hit me then that nothing about this life was truly mine anymore. Not like it had been.

This room was the smallest one in the house, big enough for a bed and not much else, but that had never bothered me. I’d just been grateful Brandy had let me stay with her. I didn’t have much stuff either, and all of it seemed like something from a dream now anyway. I’d earned the money and purchased it all myself, but everything felt like trinkets from another life. A double bed with emerald green throw pillows. Piles of books. Cute little houseplants that desperately needed to be watered.

On my dresser was a framed photo of my parents. Or rather, the people Jophiel had said were my parents. I picked it up and studied it, but I had no memory of any of these people. With a huff, I slammed the frame facedown on the dresser. Probably a damn stock photo.

I pressed my palms to my eyes, willing back the tears I didn’t want to cry. I’d done enough crying already and I was damn tired of it, but I didn’t know how to move on from this either. I’d come back here in the hopes of returning to my ordinary life, even for just a short time, but that life was a lie. These things weren’t mine. They belonged to Hannah. And Hannah wasn’t real.

How could Jophiel have done this to me? Not just once, but again and again?

The more I tried to ignore my memories of those other fake lives, the more I saw and remembered. Other homes where I lived by myself, with few friends or other connections. Jobs that tied me to one spot and kept me too poor to do much of anything. Relationships that never went anywhere. I even had a dog once, a little mutt with big brown eyes and a shaggy coat. What happened to that dog? I had no idea.

Jophiel had kept me close-by and completely clueless so she could control me. Supposedly for my protection, but that didn’t excuse her behavior or her actions. That didn’t make it right. Nobody should be able to take over someone else’s life like that.

And she’d kept me from my mate.

I was still upset with Lucifer, but she had no right to keep me apart from him for so many years. She'd taken his memories too, I remembered now. We should have had a chance to grieve our unborn daughter together, and instead we'd been torn apart and made to forget. Now we had the memories back, but we were both too broken to deal with them.

Brandy called out that dinner was almost ready, and I realized I was supposed to be pulling myself together. I stared at myself in the mirror, noting my stringy blond hair and the dark circles under my blue eyes. I really was a mess. I tried to clean up a bit, changing my clothes, brushing my hair, throwing on some deodorant. The best I could do without taking a shower.

As I headed down to dinner, plastering on a fake smile for my companions, I felt more lost than ever. What in the world was I supposed to do now? Where did I truly belong? And who was I, really?

HANNAH



In the morning there was only one place for me to go—my flower shop. I'd crashed in my bedroom overnight, though I'd barely slept. I'd been too plagued by nightmares and memories to get much rest. Now I covered my mouth with a yawn as the Lamborghini approached the familiar little shop with its dark green awning and elegant white script spelling out the name Elegant Thorn.

Thorn. My last name. I'd always been amused by how perfect it was for the owners of a flower shop, like perhaps the name had influenced my parents' profession somehow. Now I knew the last name was completely fake. I wondered if it amused Jophiel to give me that name, or if she was just that uncreative and went for the obvious. Probably the latter, knowing my sister. I was lucky she didn't name me Hannah Blossom or something.

I got out of the car, but held up a hand when Zel started to follow me. "I need a moment in there alone. Please."

She huffed and looked like she might argue, but then said, "Fine. I'll be right outside though."

With a deep breath, I approached the front door. The place was closed and empty, the windows still displaying jack-o-lanterns and other Halloween decor, even though it was days past the holiday. We should have moved on to Thanksgiving preparations already, but there was no sign of Maggie, who was supposed to have been running the place for me in my absence.

I pulled the keys out of my pocket and unlocked the door before walking inside. The shop smelled musty, like greenery that was giving up, like death was already taking some of my beloved plants. They all needed tending, and it broke my heart to see them in such a state. Petals were starting to curl, and leaves drooped and had lost their shine. I sighed, knowing this was my fault. I hadn't been the most attentive boss while in Las Vegas, especially with everything going on, and it's not like I paid Maggie much either. It had probably gotten to be too much for her, and I couldn't blame her for walking away.

It didn't matter now anyway. The shop was another lie. My parents had never owned this place. They weren't even real. For the last five years, I'd kept the business going out of loyalty to their memory and a desire to keep their legacy alive, but it was all another of Jophiel's fabrications.

The shop hadn't ever made a lot of money, but I'd worked so hard to keep it going. And for what? In the grand scheme of things, what had been the point? Oh, the work was enjoyable, sure. I loved dealing with plants, and seeing the joy and beauty that flowers could bring to the world. How could I not, when I was the reincarnation of Persephone? But I'd always wanted more. I'd always known, deep down, that my life was meant for bigger things than running a small flower shop.

I filled a can with water and began giving the plants a drink, talking to them as I went, reassuring them they'd be okay. They'd have some water and perk right back up in no time. I touched a leaf here and there as I passed, willing it to grow strong again. I breathed in the scent of the roses, and smiled faintly at the bright daffodils as I walked through the place I used to call mine.

I was deep in the back row of plants when the bell chimed to announce that someone had come in the front door. "Zel, I said wait outside."

Nobody answered, and I paused. Zel would have shot back a mouthful of attitude, and she would have stopped anyone who was a threat. Shit, what if it was a customer? I sucked in a deep breath and tried to put a pleasant expression on my face as I walked toward the front of the shop. But then I spotted him through the rows of greenery.

Lucifer.

He wore a crisp black suit and a white shirt with the collar unbuttoned, radiating sex, power, and dominance with every step he took toward me. My emotions warred inside me. Seeing him again was torture now, with

the knowledge of what he'd done, along with all my recovered memories. But I'd missed him too. Of course I did. How could I not? He was my mate. We were bound together for all eternity...like it or not.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, keeping my voice as even as I could manage.

"I allowed you to leave Las Vegas," he said as he stalked toward me. "But you've been gone far too long. It's time you return home with me."

His arrogant, commanding tone immediately annoyed me. I put my hands on my hips as I stood my ground against him. "And if I won't go?"

A dark smile crossed his sensual lips. "Then I'll make you come. In both senses of the word. Should I get the handcuffs? That could be fun."

"You're impossible," I muttered, as I tried to ignore the erotic thoughts his words brought to mind. "I'm not going anywhere."

His smile dropped and his green eyes burned with dark power. "You belong by my side. You're my mate. My queen. My *wife*."

"We are not married!" I blurted out.

"Oh, yes we are. I know you went to see Jophiel, and she must have given you your memories back. Surely you remember our hasty wedding with Samael as our officiant, done at your request after we discovered you were pregnant. I thought the whole thing was silly—angels and demons tend not to bother with the marriage thing—but you insisted. I assumed it was an eccentricity from all the lives you spent as a human."

Shit. I remembered that now that he'd brought it up. We'd had the private ceremony at his palace in Hell, and he'd chuckled at me for wearing a white dress and insisting on a bouquet of flowers. I'd wanted the whole human ceremony because I was just so happy about the pregnancy and so head over heels in love with Lucifer. With our relationship forbidden and secret, I wanted some way to make it feel official before our daughter was born. Samael had married us outside in a private garden, under the endless stars, and for a short time everything had seemed perfect.

But I also remembered something else. Seeing Gadreel poke his head into the garden, looking for Samael, then apologizing profusely for interrupting us. That's when he found me. And only a few weeks later, he killed me...and our daughter.

I couldn't even reply to Lucifer, because the memory of our wedding only brought back pain now. What once had been a joyous day only

reminded me of everything we'd lost. My face crumpled and I turned away, covering my eyes with my hands to try to stop the tears from escaping.

Lucifer's arms wrapped around me, pulling me against him and holding me tight. "So you do remember."

"Part of me wishes I didn't. Our daughter..." The pain returned, and it was too much. I couldn't breathe. I pressed my face into his shoulder, craving his familiar strength.

"I know," he said in a low voice. "I understand."

Yes—he was the only one who truly understood. Jophiel had taken his memories too, and he'd only just regained them a few days ago. The pain was fresh for him also, which was why he'd warned me I might not want the memories back.

I gripped the front of his suit. "I should have listened to you and stayed in the dark."

"No, it's better that you know. Harder, yes. But better." His hand moved slowly across my back as he held me close. "I knew you'd choose to get the memories back. You always did want the truth."

The truth...the truth brought pain. But it brought clarity too. I took a deep breath and looked up at Lucifer with determination burning inside me. "Adam. He took our daughter. He has to pay."

Lucifer growled in response, his chest rumbling with the force of his rage. "My people are searching for Adam as we speak. With the curse broken, we can defeat him once and for all."

I nodded, focusing on the anger to get through the pain. Vengeance wouldn't return what was lost, but it would help. And as long as Adam was out there, he would continue trying to torment us and everyone we loved. I was going to kill that fucker, once and for all, even if it was the last thing I did in this life.

"Adam has taken everything from me a thousand times, but that night I thought he might truly have broken me," Lucifer said, his voice distant as he recalled his own memories. "You vanished, leaving behind only a trail of blood, and I knew it was bad. I managed to track you to Jophiel, but by then it was too late. She told me you were both gone." His hands tightened around me, pressing me harder against him. "I'm very familiar with grief after watching you die so many times, but this...this was different. It was unbearable. I could barely think straight, and Jophiel was able to

overpower me and remove my memories. Perhaps I didn't fight it too hard. Perhaps oblivion seemed preferable."

I sensed the great depths of grief inside Lucifer, akin to my own, even though he was good at hiding it from his face. "I wanted the same thing. It seemed easier at the time to forget."

"But now the pain is back, just as raw, and you want to tear the world apart," he finished for me.

Emotion made my throat tight. He knew me so well after hundreds of lifetimes together, no matter what body I was in. "Yes."

He cupped my cheek in his hand, his eyes intense as he gazed into mine. "Then return to Las Vegas with me as my dark queen, and together we'll burn the world down and rebuild it from the ashes."

I stepped back from him and glanced around the flower shop that had once meant so much to me. Now all I wanted was for Adam to pay. I wouldn't find justice if I stayed here in Hannah's life. I wouldn't find peace either, if such a thing was possible. But leaving this place behind was harder than I expected. For the last five years, this had been my life. Real or not, it was everything I'd known...until I'd met Lucifer.

I turned back to him, my decision made. "I'll go with you, but just because I'm returning doesn't mean I forgive you for what you did. If you want me to be your queen, you have to start treating me as your equal. You can't keep making decisions that turn my whole world upside down without discussing them with me first."

His eyes narrowed. "I already explained why I had to kill you the way I did. You're welcome to be mad at me for the next few hundred years, but I stand by my actions."

"But you didn't give me a choice! Just like Jophiel, you took away my options and had all the power in the situation. I know you had your reasons, but I still can't accept that this was the only way, and I'm not sure how to move on from it. You *killed* me, Lucifer. With your own hands."

He scowled at that, his jaw clenching, but after a moment he managed to say, "I suppose I'm so used to making all the decisions on my own after ruling the demons for thousands of years, and most of that time without you by my side. I will do my best to consult with you in the future."

It wasn't an apology, but it was something. An acknowledgment that maybe he'd fucked up a little at least. I wasn't sure Lucifer could really change at this point, but he was my mate. The two of us were inevitable,

and I couldn't escape him even if I wanted to. Which meant I had to find a way to live with him. More than that, I *wanted* to find a way. I couldn't imagine my life without him.

"What will you do about the shop?" he asked.

"Close it, I guess. It was never really mine anyway. Jophiel is the real owner."

He rested a hand on my shoulder possessively. "I'll send someone to deal with it. My people will handle everything."

I nodded and looked around the place for what was probably the last time, and all I felt was an aching hollowness deep inside me. "I'm ready."

LUCIFER

Hannah was silent the entire drive back to her friend Brandy's house. I couldn't blame her. She'd been through a lot these past few days, but now she would return home to Vegas where she belonged, and together we would get through this. It was clear Hannah needed time, and I had plenty to give her—we had forever, after all.

But first, she wished to say goodbye to her friend and collect her things. We left the limo behind and approached the front door of the quaint little house, while Zel waited in the Lamborghini. I was probably going to have to send Jophiel a bill for that car, since my mate seemed to have claimed it as her own. Or, if Hannah preferred, I'd buy her a new one in every color if that would make her happy. I owed her that much.

"Oh," Brandy said, when she opened the door and caught sight of me. She didn't shrink back, but her eyes got huge when she realized the devil was standing on her front porch. We'd met once before, when I'd rescued her from an abandoned motel in the middle of the desert where she was being held captive by shifters. Needless to say, I'd made a strong impression.

"I believe you've met Lucifer," Hannah said, gesturing at me.

I took Brandy's hand and kissed it, which only made her look more shocked, much to my amusement. "A pleasure to see you again. You seem to have recovered nicely from your ordeal."

"Thank you again for saving us." Brandy stepped back and allowed us entry into her home. "Please come in."

I followed Hannah inside and surveyed the living room with furniture that had obviously seen better days. A rug that curled slightly at the end. A couch with arms worn thin from use. A pillow with frayed edges. But most shocking of all was Asmodeus standing in the center of the room in his black suit, somehow looking as though he belonged there.

"I'm going back to Las Vegas," Hannah told Brandy. "I'm just here to get my things."

Brandy shot me a quick glance and nodded. "I'll help you pack up."

The two of them went up the stairs, leaving me alone with Asmodeus. He cleared his throat.

"My lord," he said, bowing slightly.

I scanned him from head to toe, noting how much he had changed. No longer did he radiate his incubus sensuality, that innate power that drew people to him and made them want to rip their clothes off. To all of my senses, he was completely human.

"It's true then," I said. "You gave up your immortality."

The ancient demon bowed his head, his black hair catching the light. "Yes. I've made all the arrangements to pass control of my Lilim duties to my assistant Himeros. Everything shall continue to run smoothly, my lord."

I held out a hand to him. "I'll be sad to lose you. You've always been one of the few I could trust, and a good friend too. I wish you all the best."

He clasped my hand in a warm shake, and seemed relieved by my words. "Thank you, Lucifer. That means a lot."

"Was it worth it?" I asked in a low voice. "Giving up all your powers and your immortality?"

Asmodeus stared at the stairs Brandy had gone up. "It's worth it. I'd do it a million times over for my mate."

I understood perfectly. I would've done the same if that was what it took to be with my woman too. "Take good care of her. Hannah is very fond of her."

Asmodeus stood taller, his chest puffing out a bit. "I will. I plan to take Brandy and her son to Disney World soon, and then I'll get us a huge mansion on the beach and spoil the crap out of them." His gaze softened. "Brandy's been through a lot. So has her son. I'm going to treat her like a queen and give them both the life they deserve."

“Good,” I said. “You certainly have the money for it, but please let me know if there’s anything you need from me.” For decades, Asmodeus ran strip clubs under my command in service of the Lilim, and though he was passing on that responsibility now, he’d been rewarded generously for his work over the years. Besides, Asmodeus was almost as old as I was, and no doubt had a large stash of money tucked away after all this time.

Asmodeus hesitated. “Actually there is something. I wondered if I could have one last favor from you for all my years of loyal service.”

That sounded ominous, but I’d always been one to grant favors, usually in exchange for a favor in return at some point. “What is it?”

“Brandy’s mother has terminal cancer. There is nothing the human doctors can do. Might you ask one of the angels to heal her? I know you have some allies among the Malakim now.”

I clasped his shoulder and gave him a firm nod. “It will be done.”

“Thank you, my lord,” he said, his shoulders dropping in relief. “You are a fine king, and it was an honor to serve you.”

Hannah came down the stairs then, carrying a bag on each arm. “I think I have everything I need.”

Brandy also returned with her son and the older, frail woman who must be her mother. Hannah looked at them all with sadness in her eyes, and I took the bags from her arms, along with the one Brandy was holding.

Hannah gave me a nod in thanks and then turned to the others. “I guess this is it then. Thank you for letting me live here with you for the last few years. I’m sorry to leave in such a rush.”

Brandy shook her head and grabbed Hannah’s hands. “No, thank you for helping around the house with Jack and everything else. It won’t be the same without you here. Promise you’ll come visit sometime.”

“I will. And you all have to come to Las Vegas to visit us.”

“Yes, my hotel would be happy to host your family whenever you’d like,” I said. “My treat, of course.”

Donna’s face lit up. “That sounds lovely.”

“Yes, it does.” Brandy fixed a glare on me. “But listen. You better not hurt Hannah. I don’t care if you are the devil, I will kick your ass.”

I raised an eyebrow at the feisty human. We both knew how that would end, but I had to give Brandy credit for her courage and loyalty to Hannah. “Noted. And now we really should be on our way.”

Hannah nodded, and then gave each person a long hug before saying her final goodbyes. I shook Asmodeus's hand one last time, and then gripped Hannah's bags and led her outside.

"Took you long enough," Zel said, from where she leaned against the Lamborghini.

Our limo driver rushed out and took Hannah's bags from me, then loaded them into the car. He was a young vampire and eager to serve, but I couldn't help but wonder if he was truly loyal or only spying on me for his Archdemon, Baal. When we returned, I'd have to deal with the Archdemons and find out who among them was loyal to me.

As I ushered Hannah toward the limo, the hair on the back of my neck prickled, just as Zel drew her knives. The sky was cloudy and full of the promise of rain, a rare and precious thing in Southern California, but it darkened even further as a large shape flew over the nearby houses.

"Something's coming." I pushed Hannah between me and the limo as I scanned the sky for the threat. "Get in the car."

The shape flew close enough that I could identify it. Large wings with dark red scales. Reptilian black eyes. Huge talons and fangs. A fucking dragon. Out here in suburbia in the middle of the damn day when anyone could see it. The outright insubordination made me furious, and I quickly spread darkness around the area, obscuring us from any neighbors who might peer out their windows.

"What's happening?" Hannah asked, and I realized she was the only one who couldn't see through the murky shadows. The rest of us all had eyes accustomed to living in the eternal darkness of Hell, but as an angel, Hannah was more suited for the land of light.

Zel jumped into action, spreading her black wings and launching into the air toward the dragon. I maintained a defensive pose in front of Hannah, who'd ignored me when I'd ordered her into the car, naturally.

The dragon immediately sliced at Zel with its talons, though he seemed to have enough sense not to shoot flames from his mouth. If he set fire to Brandy's neighborhood, he would quickly see the true depths of my rage, just before I ended his life.

Zel managed to catch the tip of the dragon's wing with her light-infused dagger, making the beast roar loud enough to shake the windows of the nearby houses. I hoped the residents would write that off as an earthquake or a loud truck passing by, but this had to end quickly or

someone would get suspicious. The last thing I wanted to deal with was a bunch of nosy humans showing up and asking questions.

The dragon retaliated by knocking Zel back hard. She crashed against a nearby roof, then rolled off it and dropped onto the grass, sending shingles flying. Oh, for fuck's sake.

"Can't we help her?" Hannah asked, and I noticed she was glowing again, like a lighthouse in the middle of a storm. The dragon noticed too, and immediately honed in on us.

"She's fine," I said. "You just focus on keeping your powers under control. I'll handle this."

I had to get control of this situation, fast. As the dragon tucked its wings and dove toward us, I reached out with tentacles of darkness and wrapped them around the beast. He tried to shrug them off and managed to get a wing free, but then Zel slammed into his side, distracting him enough for me to encase him completely in my shadows. Shadows which Hannah's bright light was quickly burning through. She didn't even realize she was doing it either.

The dragon spun and twisted, but couldn't escape the dark coils wrapped around him, and his momentum carried him straight down into the middle of the road. He hit it so hard he sent out fractures and cracks in the asphalt where he landed. Zel set down beside him, brandishing her daggers, and the dragon hissed at her with hatred in his eyes.

I stood over the dragon, looking down at the captive beast. Fury pounded in my veins, and I allowed darkness to swirl around me menacingly while brilliant blue hellfire sparked in my palms. "You dare to attack me and my mate in the middle of a human area in broad daylight. Explain yourself."

"I seek vengeance!" The dragon roared the words in my face, his fangs dripping with venom. "You killed my father!"

Ah, of course. This must be Mammon's oldest son, Valefar. I'd met him a few times before, but never in his dragon form. With some effort I clenched my hands, extinguishing the hellfire, as I remembered Samael's words about making peace with the remaining dragons. I supposed he had a point. There was a reason I kept him as my advisor, after all.

"You're right. I did kill your father. Mammon conspired against me and attempted a coup. He attacked me in my own home. I couldn't let such insurrection go unpunished." I held up a hand before he could say anything

in return. "Like it or not, I am your king, and you are now the Archdemon of the dragons. There are very few of your kind left, which means you have a choice. You can bow before me and swear loyalty, or you can go to war with me, as your father did. You know how well that went for him." I paused, letting my words sink in. "I don't want to wipe out the remaining dragons, but I will if I must."

The dragon growled, but then his reptilian eyes closed, and I sensed he had given up the fight. I nodded at Zel so she'd back away. She scowled, but sheathed her daggers and gave the dragon some space. Hannah had managed to get her glowing under control by now, and the street fell silent, the area still unnaturally dark.

Valefar got to his taloned feet and shook out his wings, his gaze still on me. "This isn't over."

With a heavy flap of his wings, he took to the skies and flew out of sight over the rows of houses. I waited until he was gone and then released the darkness, allowing the sun to shine down on the street once more through the clouds.

Hannah let out a long breath as the shadows receded, as if relieved to see the light again. "You're letting him go?"

I smoothed the front of my suit and shrugged. "He needs to step up and become a leader to his people now. If he doesn't, we'll deal with it."

I helped Hannah into the limo so we could resume our journey to the private jet that would take us home to Las Vegas. But as she slid across the black leather seats, her face was troubled.

"What is it?" I asked.

"My powers. I'm having a hard time controlling them. I think it's because I have so many memories clambering around inside my head, it's hard to keep them straight and sort through them all." She leaned her head back on the leather seat, as if exhausted. "Jophiel offered to help me remember how to use them, but I don't want anything from her."

"I know some angels who might be able to help. The ones who helped resurrect you." I rested a possessive hand on her knee, and though she stiffened, she didn't move away. A small sign of progress. "I'll take care of everything."

Anything she needed, I'd get her. If she wanted me to go to the depths of Hell or the heights of Heaven, so be it.

I'd do whatever it took to win Hannah's heart back.

HANNAH



Walking back into the penthouse was like returning to the dark depths of the underworld. Lucifer wanted me to be his queen again, the Persephone to his Hades, but how could I rule by his side when I couldn't forgive him? Or when he didn't treat me as an equal?

And would any demon accept me, an angel, as their queen?

I returned to the guest room, unable to share a bedroom with Lucifer for the time being. I was pleased to see someone had brought my bags up, and that my plants here were all still doing well. Oddly, this space felt more like home than any of the other places I'd visited over the last few days, especially once I began unpacking the belongings I'd brought from Brandy's house. The green throw pillows did a nice job of touching up the otherwise bland furnishings, and on the nightstand I added a photo of me with Brandy and Jack when we went to the San Diego Zoo, which made me smile every time I looked at it.

When I stepped back into the main room of the penthouse—which had all been restored to its former glory, even the destroyed bar—the five people who'd been there when I'd been resurrected were back, sitting around the room on leather couches and black barstools. I looked at Lucifer, waiting for him to properly introduce me to them, but then my eyes landed on the dark-haired man beside him and I inhaled sharply.

Kassiel.

My son.

The knowledge hit me in the chest so hard and with such surety I was shocked I hadn't realized it before. Rapid, brief glimpses of his childhood

lit up my mind like the flash of a camera, all from my life as Lenore in the 19th century. He looked so much like his father, both as a child and now. He even wore a similar well-fitted black suit.

I stepped toward him, my heart nearly bursting out of me with the need to be with him again after all these long years. “Kassiel...”

“Hello, mother.” He gave me a warm smile, but his voice seemed reserved, and his English accent only added to the effect. I moved close and he embraced me, and now I was crying again, but for once they were tears of joy. I didn’t even care that all the other people in the room were surely staring at us. All I knew was that I had my son back after decades apart, and I wanted to savor every second with him.

I reached up to touch his face as I looked him over, marveling at how he hadn’t physically changed after over a century, yet he somehow looked different. Older. Wiser. Damn, I’d missed so much of his life.

“I’m so happy to see you,” I said, unable to contain my huge smile. “I want to know every single thing that’s happened to you while I’ve been gone.”

“We’ll catch up later. I promise.” Kassiel squeezed my hand and stepped back, then gestured to the curvy brunette sitting on the sofa. “Let me introduce you to my mate, Olivia.”

She was distractingly beautiful, her eyes a clear green, her skin almost luminescent, and her curls a rich, dark brown. In the past I would have felt intimidated by her beauty, and I nearly took a step back, like I would have done as a human—but then I remembered I was an angel too. More than that, I was Eve and Persephone and so much more. Besides, I was Kassiel’s mother. If anyone should be intimidated, it was her. I stood my ground and gave her a nod in acknowledgment.

“It’s an honor to meet you,” Olivia said, as she rose to her feet.

“Olivia is the only known half-succubus, half-angel hybrid,” Lucifer said. “She currently acts as the official liaison between angels and demons, working for Archangel Gabriel and myself to keep the peace. I thought she might be able to help you balance living between both worlds.”

“I would appreciate that,” I said. So many of my memories were of war between angels and demons, a war I’d fought on both sides. Now we were at peace, but things between the two races still seemed strained, and I was definitely caught in the middle as an angel surrounded by demons.

“I asked Olivia’s other mates to join us as well,” Lucifer said. “As angels, they can answer your questions and work with you to control your powers.” He nodded toward a serious man with cool, calculating eyes and glossy black hair. “Bastien, in particular, should be able to help with that. He’s also an Ofanim.”

Bastien bowed his head in response. “I shall assist you however I can.”

“Thank you,” I said.

Lucifer turned toward the handsome olive-skinned man sitting at the bar, who flashed me a charming smile, his eyes sparkling. “This is Marcus. He’s the one who resurrected you. I plan to send him to heal Brandy’s mother.”

I stepped forward and took Marcus’s hands, giving them a light squeeze. “Thank you for using your powers to bring me back, and for helping my friend. I owe you so much.”

“It’s what I do,” he said, with a quick wink.

Lucifer nodded toward the last person in the room, a broad-shouldered, muscular man with golden hair and a square jaw. “Callan is Jophiel’s son. Your nephew.”

My eyes widened as I studied Callan closer. He did have some of Jophiel’s look to him, though I suspected he had a lot of his father in there too. He stood near the window overlooking Las Vegas, as if trying to remain as far away from Lucifer as possible, and I wondered if there was some history there.

“I look forward to getting to know you. My relationship with my sister is...” I hesitated, searching for the diplomatic word. “Strained. But I hope that won’t stop us from being a family.”

Callan grunted. “My relationship with my mother is strained too. She’s not exactly an easy person to love.”

“No, she’s not,” I said with a faint smile. “Jophiel mentioned she had another son too.”

“Yes. Ekariel.” Callan’s jaw clenched. “He was kidnapped as a child and held for years by a human cult bent on killing all supernaturals. He’s currently taking some classes at Seraphim Academy so he can catch up on everything he missed over the years.”

How terrible. Jophiel had mentioned the same thing, but it had happened after I was turned human. Maybe I should be taking classes with

him also—I obviously had a lot to catch up on also. “I hope to meet him too someday.”

“I should get going so I can heal your friend.” Marcus set down his glass and stood. He leaned forward and kissed Olivia on the cheek. “I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

I watched their interactions closely. Was Olivia with all four of these men? And they were just...okay with it? Including my son? How interesting. I supposed if she was part succubus she’d need more than one person to satisfy her needs, but in my vague memories I’d never seen a Lilim with actual mates before. They tended to not form attachments, from what I recalled. Then again, Asmodeus had given up his incubus powers and immortality to be with Brandy, so I supposed anything was possible.

“We should probably head out too,” Olivia said.

“We’ll begin training tomorrow after you’ve had a chance to rest,” Bastien told me.

“Thank you.” I swallowed in an attempt to bring my emotions back under control, but it was hard. I looked again at the people in the room, including my nephew and my son, remembering all they’d done for me. I wouldn’t be alive now if not for them. “I can’t thank you all enough.”

Once everyone had left, I spun around to face Lucifer. “Why didn’t you tell me about Kassiel?”

He let out a frustrated sigh as he moved behind the bar. “As I’ve mentioned before, I’ve been slowly doling out information about your past lives to not overwhelm you. When you walked into my penthouse and asked me to find your friend, I couldn’t exactly say, ‘hey, I know we just met, but we have three sons together.’”

Three... Yes.

I remembered now. In the back corners of my mind, I’d known I had children, but now the feeling inside me sharpened, and with it came two other names: Belial and Damien.

“Where are they now?” I asked. Belial was the oldest, born during my original life as Eve. Damien came second, when I was Persephone, and Kassiel was the youngest. They each had centuries between them, but that was fairly normal since having a child as an immortal was difficult and rare.

Lucifer scowled and poured himself a drink. "I haven't seen either of them in years."

"Why not?" I sat on a barstool and watched the amber liquid pour into his glass. "I'll take one too."

Lucifer arched one of his perfect, dark eyebrows, looking every inch the handsome devil he was. "I thought you didn't drink."

"That was back when I thought my parents were killed by a drunk driver." As soon as he poured me a glass, I downed it and set the glass down, feeling the burn in my throat. Not that it would affect me now that I was an angel again. And if there was ever a time for a drink, it was now.

Lucifer looked amused as he poured me a second drink. "Damien lives in Faerie and acts as a spy in High King Oberon's court. We pretend to be estranged so Oberon will trust him, but he secretly reports back to me."

"Sounds dangerous." I bristled a little, wondering how he could put our son in such danger.

"It was his idea." He lifted a shoulder in a casual shrug. "Damien can handle himself. We made sure of that."

I stared into my glass, reminding myself that my sons were not boys anymore, but ancient, powerful men in their own right. How strange to realize your own children were older than you were—at least in this body.

"And Belial..." Lucifer finished his whiskey and slammed the glass down on the counter. "I don't know where Belial is. We haven't spoken in centuries."

Centuries? How was that possible? I vaguely recalled that our eldest son had always had a difficult relationship with Lucifer, though the details were still fuzzy. I hoped more of them would come back to me soon. "And Kassiel? What's he been doing all these years?"

"He's been working as a spy among the angels for me for some time," Lucifer said, practically swelling with pride for our son. "He recently helped take down a secret society of angels bent on sending all demons back to Hell permanently."

A smile lit up my face upon hearing of our son's accomplishments, but then it dropped when I remembered there should have been a fourth child. Our first and only daughter. I quickly looked away before the emotion could grab hold of me again.

Lucifer slowly walked around the bar, then put his arm around me, drawing me against him. "I know. I mourn her as well."

I let him comfort me, putting my head on his chest as I thought about the little girl that should've been. The pain haunted me as if it had happened yesterday. When I looked up at Lucifer I sensed he felt the same grief, though he was much better at hiding it.

Unable to help myself, I reached up and touched his jaw, slowly rubbing my fingertips across the dark stubble. That light touch seemed to ignite something inside him, because his eyes suddenly blazed just before he lowered his head and pressed his lips to mine. Fire coursed through me as his mouth claimed me, reminding me he was my mate and we were meant to be together. That I was his, always his, for all eternity.

My body begged me to surrender, to lose myself in him, but somehow I managed to pull back. Our eyes met, and I felt short of breath, my blood racing with desire. Lucifer's lips were parted slightly, practically demanding I kiss them again, and it took every ounce of willpower not to close the gap between us. The bond between us was strong, drawing us together at all times, and we'd been through so much together, it was natural for us to want to find comfort in each other again. But I wasn't ready to be with him. Not yet. He still had a lot to answer for, and I still had to figure out who I was, both with and without Lucifer.

"I'm going to bed," I said.

"Yes, you are," Lucifer growled. "With me."

I hated how sexy he was when he was arrogant and demanding, and I hated how much I desperately wanted to give in to him. But I wouldn't. I refused. "Not a chance."

The look he gave me was absolutely smoldering. "I'm tempted to haul you over my shoulder and carry you back to my bed, but I'll give you tonight to rest. But that's it. One night."

Heat pooled between my thighs at his words, despite my objections. "And then?"

Darkness gathered around him as he gave me a villainous smile. "And then I'll remind you that you're *mine*."

HANNAH



The next day, Bastien joined me just after breakfast to begin my training, and I suggested we head outside onto the balcony since it was such a nice day. You'd never know it was November in Las Vegas, with those perfect blue skies and the warm breeze. My angelic side wanted to let my wings out and preen in the sun like a bird, but I restrained myself.

We took seats at a table near the infinity pool, with a view of the famous Vegas Strip below us. Bastien's sharp eyes focused on me, and I had a feeling he never missed anything. "We're going to start by learning about auras," he said. "In your position you'll need to be able to discern truth."

I nodded, eager to learn—or remember, rather. "I can already tell if someone is lying. Even when I was a human I...felt things. Like a gut instinct. I just didn't know what it was then."

"That was your Ofanim powers coming through even though they were suppressed. Now you must do it with intention. Viewing auras allows you to see the truth about someone even if they don't speak. Do you remember how to see them?"

I filtered through my memories, but nothing came to mind. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, but I shook my head as frustration prickled through each of my nerves. "No, I can't seem to bring the ability to mind."

"That's understandable after what you've been through. The memories you've lost and regained." His voice was calm and level, like a professor

giving a lecture. “When I look at someone’s aura, it’s like instead of smelling or tasting, there’s another sense. You simply need to turn that sense on.”

“But how?”

“It’s like examining the light around us in a different way, and bending it to our will.”

I wasn’t sure what that meant but I tried again. Nothing worked. It was like I was blocked somehow.

After a few minutes of failure, he sat back and stroked his chin while he considered me. “I suppose we could try a trick they use to teach the new Ofanim at Seraphim Academy, though it seems rather silly to me.”

“I’m open to anything at this point,” I said.

He let out a sigh, as if the idea was distasteful to him. “Very well. First, close your eyes. Then imagine you have a pair of sunglasses, perfectly shaped for your face.”

“Sunglasses?” I asked with a laugh, but I did as he said, picturing a pair of black shades in a slightly retro style, the kind you’d wear while sitting at the pool and sipping a margarita.

“Yes. Now hold them in your hands and pretend to put them on your face, imagining that lens going in front of your eyes and how it changes the way you see the world.” He spoke slowly, and I did what he said. “When you open your eyes, you will now view the world through the lens of truth.”

The whole thing felt ridiculous, and I was about to laugh it all off, but when I opened my eyes, everything had changed. It was as if my eyes had relaxed behind the pretend lenses, allowing me to truly see.

Bastien’s bright aura circulated around his body, the color predominantly ice blue, like a frosty winter morning, with a ring of white light shimmering around the edges. Other colors swirled throughout the aura too, but there wasn’t a speck of darkness there.

“It’s beautiful,” I whispered.

“Yes, most of them are. Can you see the bright light around my aura? That tells you I’m an angel.”

I nodded slowly as it began to come back to me. “Demons have a ring of darkness.”

“Indeed. And do you remember what the other colors mean?”

“They give you a hint about personality. Yours is predominantly blue.” I spoke faster as I remembered. “You’re calm and thoughtful. Intellectual. But there’s a thread of red throughout too—you’re in love.”

He cleared his throat and looked away. “Very good. Now I want you to tell me if I’m lying solely by looking at my aura. My favorite food is broccoli.”

His aura didn’t change, just continued to swirl with bright beautiful colors, and I had to laugh. “True. But seriously? Broccoli?”

“It’s versatile,” he said with a slight shrug. “My right hand is dominant.”

“Also true.”

“I grew up in Georgia.”

His aura became murky and dim as he spoke the words, and I nearly jumped out of my chair. “False!”

“Correct,” he said with the faintest hint of a smile.

The success emboldened me, and we continued on for a few minutes, before Bastien decided we could move on. Since I was having trouble controlling my powers of light, we worked on that next. My emotions seemed to trigger it, and Bastien helped me remember how to summon light when I wanted, and how to keep the power contained when I didn’t.

We kept going until lunchtime, and by the time Bastien stood to leave, I was well along the way to being able to control my Ofanim powers and feeling a lot more confident in myself as an angel. He promised we’d meet again tomorrow, when he’d help me remember some other Ofanim powers, and I found myself looking forward to it.

After my session with Bastien ended, I got a text asking me to meet Olivia at the Ambrosia Cafe, one of the restaurants in the hotel, and I headed down to join her for lunch. I hadn’t seen Lucifer all day, but that suited me just fine at the moment, although my pulse raced when I thought about what might happen tonight.

Olivia looked as gorgeous as she did when I saw her yesterday, even in casual jeans and a black t-shirt, and her innate succubus allure made numerous heads turn as she waited outside the restaurant for me. She

greeted me warmly, and then the host seated us in a private booth in the corner, which I had a feeling was reserved for VIP guests. Like the owner's woman.

"Thanks for inviting me to lunch," I said, after we were seated and had ordered some food.

Olivia smiled at me across the table. "I thought you might like to talk about what it's like to straddle both the angel and demon worlds. Kassiel told me a bit about what you've gone through, and it sounds like you might need a friend who knows about being stuck in the middle."

"I would love that. This is my first life as an angel, and I'm not sure what the demons will think of me being Lucifer's mate. Especially since as Haniel I fought in the war on the other side." I played with my fork idly as I thought back on all my lives. "Although I also fought on the demons' side as a Fallen, and spent many lives as Lucifer's mate in Hell. But I'm not sure if the demons will see it that way."

"I understand. Both angels and demons had a hard time accepting me at first too. Even now, I'm constantly torn between both sides, never fully belonging on one or the other. My loyalties are always divided, because that's the essence of who I am. Half angel. Half demon. And in a way, you're the same. You may be in an angel's body now, but you remember being other people in the past."

"Yes, that's exactly it." I let out a long sigh, feeling a little lighter. "It's nice to talk to someone who gets it."

"You and I are probably the only two who could understand," she said with a laugh. "I'll admit, I'm selfishly glad we met just so I could have someone to vent to about it."

I chuckled at that. "Lucifer said you're working as a liaison between the angels and demons?"

She twisted her mouth a little before she spoke. "Yes, I'm trying to keep the peace between them, but it takes a lot of time and effort to overcome thousands of years of hatred. Both sides believe the other one is the villain, but we're hoping to change that."

"Yes, I remember that from this life. Before I knew who I was, I was convinced that demons were evil and that Lucifer was, well...the devil. In every sense of the word. Only once I met him and began remembering my other lives did I see how wrong I was, and I realized I'd thought the same

thing about angels when I was a Fallen. I urged Lucifer to end the war, but I died before I could see it come to pass.”

Olivia’s eyes soften. “But it did come to pass. Lucifer and Michael signed the Earth Accords over thirty years ago. I’m sure you had something to do with changing Lucifer’s mind about angels.”

“Perhaps,” I said, just as the server brought our fancy salads along with some breadsticks. “I also vaguely remember being Persephone and spending some of my time ruling with Lucifer in Hell, and the rest of my time in Faerie. That was a struggle too, but at least demons and fae weren’t at war then.”

“No, the fae have always managed to stay neutral, although in my opinion, they’re really trying to manipulate both sides for their own gain. I wouldn’t be surprised if the High King has plans to move on Earth someday.” Olivia paused and her cheeks colored. “Sorry. I hope that’s not offensive, since you were a fae once.”

I waved a hand. “It was long ago, and you’re not wrong about the fae. Even among their own courts, their intrigues are legendary. Let’s just say I didn’t struggle too hard when Hades captured me and took me to the underworld.”

“I bet. I mean, who could resist Lucifer? Or his son, for that matter?” Then she slammed a hand over her mouth, her eyes wide with horror. “Oh shit, I am so sorry. I completely forgot that you’re Kassiel’s mother. You just don’t look anything like him in this life, and um, wow I have really messed this up, haven’t I?”

Her embarrassment and awkwardness made her so much more relatable, and it only made me like her more. “It’s okay. Really. In fact, maybe you can tell me about Kassiel. How did you two meet?”

She seemed relieved, and then launched into a story about how she’d pretended to be a full-blooded angel to attend Seraphim Academy, the school where angels went to train, in order to find her missing brother. There she met her brother’s friends, Callan, Bastien, and Marcus, along with Kassiel, who was one of her professors at the time. She explained that Kassiel had been sent there undercover on a mission for Lucifer, and was also pretending to be an angel. Together they all found Olivia’s brother in Faerie and uncovered a vast conspiracy of angels trying to send demons back to Hell, led by the former Archangel Azrael, who was now in Penumbra Prison. I listened raptly as she described how my son had

helped take down Azrael's secret society, and how Lucifer had orchestrated their release when they were all sent to Penumbra Prison. My heart swelled even more with pride for my son...and for my mate. Despite once being the number one enemy of the angels, Lucifer had helped them on numerous occasions in the last few years, and now was working directly with Archangel Gabriel—Olivia's father—to make sure the two sides remained at peace.

"Thank you for telling me your story," I said, as we were finishing up our meal. "I had no idea about any of that."

"It's why we were happy to help Lucifer when he asked us to resurrect you and why we're eager to remind you about your angelic side now. We owe him a lot, and we also want to make sure the treaty stands between angels and demons." Her voice softened. "Until recently, I was forbidden to even exist, but now I can hold a privileged position in both societies, and have angel and Fallen lovers. I will fight to keep that peace however I can."

My eyebrows shot up. "Can I ask about that?"

"About having four mates?" Olivia laughed. "Of course. I'm surprised it didn't come up sooner, especially since Kassiel is one of them."

My cheeks heated. "Sorry, am I that obvious?"

"No, I'd want to know too, if the situation was reversed." She met my gaze and lowered her voice. "As part Lilim, I have to feed on the sexual energy of multiple people to survive. I tried once to do it with fewer people, and it only ended up draining them of life. Four seems to be the perfect number to keep all of us healthy and happy, and if none of the guys complain, I'm certainly not going to either."

I considered her words as we headed outside the restaurant. "Do you know Asmodeus? He recently fell in love with a human friend of mine and gave up immortality to be with her."

She smiled, but there was a touch of sadness in her eyes. "Yes, he's my half-brother actually. Mom—Lilith—told me she'd turned him mortal, and I couldn't believe it at first. I was planning to go visit him once we were done helping you." She sighed, her voice dreamy. "I hate that he's going to grow old and die, but it is rather romantic he gave everything up to be with her. And honestly, probably a lot less work than managing four mates. Sometimes it can be *a lot*."

I chuckled softly. “I can’t even imagine. One Lucifer is already enough for me.”

More than enough...and I had a feeling he was going to prove that to me tonight.

HANNAH



After my lunch with Olivia, I returned to the penthouse and found my nephew waiting at the door, looking like he'd stepped out of some comic book universe, from his broad frame to the muscular arms to the stony blue eyes.

"Hello, Callan," I said with a smile, eager to get to know more of my family. It was turning out to be much larger than I'd ever realized.

He put his muscular arms around me in an awkward hug, his breath seemingly trapped in his chest at his moment of hesitancy. "I'm not sure what to call you. Aunt Haniel?"

I'd debated going by my former name, once I realized my life as Hannah was a lie, but decided I wasn't totally Haniel anymore either. It didn't feel right, taking that name, when I hadn't been her in forty years. I wasn't sure who I was anymore, but Brandy and her family knew me as Hannah, so I decided to stick with that. Now I had to reclaim that name from the persona Jophiel had created and take control of this new, final life.

"Just Hannah is fine," I said. "At times, depending on which memory I'm riding, I don't really feel any older than you."

He nodded. "I'm here to train you in angelic combat."

"That would be great." I already knew how to fight, of course. I'd taken down gargoyles with Lucifer's sword, and defeated Gadreel too. But that was more like instinct or muscle memory, and I was nervous it might fail me when I needed it the most. I'd fought in many battles in my

previous lives, and hopefully a bit of practice would awaken those memories. I'd need them if I was going to go after Adam again.

The thought of taking him down made my adrenaline race. "Where should we do this?"

"Lucifer's arranged a room for us to use on the fourth floor."

I rolled my shoulders. "Awesome. Let me change into some more forgiving clothes, and I'll meet you there."

I quickly shoved on leggings and yanked a workout top over my head, then took the elevator to the fourth floor. When I stepped out, Callan was already there, and he led me down a corridor to an empty room clearly designed for sparring. The floors were slightly padded, the ceilings were unusually high, and mirrors lined one of the walls. As Callan shut the door, I also realized the room was sound-proofed.

Callan turned to me with a satisfied nod. "Lots of room so we can fight with our wings out. We'll work our way up to that though, along with weapons and angelic powers. For now, let's see what you remember."

As soon as I turned my head, he was already there with his huge fist swinging toward my face. I ducked and moved before the gasp even escaped my mouth, my muscles reacting instinctively. When he next attacked, I was ready this time, and I used his momentum against him so that I could spin around and kick him from behind.

"Seems like you remember a lot," he said.

"More than I expected." I couldn't help but grin, my blood already pumping from the exertion...and from excitement. It felt like my body and my soul were both waking up, reminding me of who I was—a warrior. I'd shed blood on countless battlefields since the dawn of time. Sure, I was a bit rusty after a forty-year intermission, and I needed to retrain some of those muscles again, but it was all coming back to me.

Callan lunged for me again, and we began sparring in earnest. My back hit the mat more times than I could count, but I kept getting up again. The man was an incredible fighter, and I was so out of practice there was no way I could defeat him. Not yet, anyway.

We both paused when the door opened, and Zel walked through, her face twisted with rage. "What the fuck do you think you're doing?"

I stepped forward. "It's okay, Zel. He's training me."

After giving Callan a nasty look, she turned her snarl to me. "I should be the one training you. Not some *angel*." She practically spat the word.

“I’ve known you in most of your previous lives. I’ve fought at your side for centuries. I know your strengths and weaknesses.”

Her words rang with truth inside me, and I remembered us on a battlefield in Heaven, overlooking the carnage we’d brought to the angels. Azazel stood on my right, my dark avenger and fiercest protector. But on my left there was another woman with red hair, who was both gorgeous and deadly. The one I’d seen in another memory before. I searched for her name, but it eluded me. Who was she? What had happened to her?

Callan’s gruff voice broke me out of the memory. “Hannah needs an *angel* to train her in *angelic* combat. Not a demon.”

“Fallen,” Zel corrected. “You forget I was an angel once too. For longer than you’ve been alive.” She stepped forward and spoke through gritted teeth, frustration radiating from her in waves so thick I could almost see them. “I’m thousands of years old. I actually fought in the war, which ended before you were even born. There is nothing I cannot teach her.”

Callan crossed his arms, and I had to give him credit for staring at Zel without backing down. He lifted his chin in a challenge. “Let’s see what you’ve got then, Fallen.”

I barely had a chance to move out of the way before the two of them went at it. They were pretty evenly matched, each of them blocking and attacking, ducking and weaving. Their wings quickly came out, hers black as night and his almost blindingly white, and their movements became so fast it was hard to watch.

Zel grunted as Callan sent her spinning through the air, but she recovered quickly, and zipped toward him with a speed he hadn’t expected before using her weight to push him toward the floor. He twisted and launched them both back up before grabbing her in a headlock. She shoved him off and tackled him around the waist one last time before they sprang away from each other.

Zel stared at him, her dark wings beating slowly behind her to keep her aloft. “Not bad, son of Michael. I can see why they wanted you to lead the Angelic Army. Why did you turn the job down?”

“I fell in love with a half-demon,” Callan said dryly as he wiped a bead of sweat from his brow. “My priorities changed.”

I held up my hands before they started fighting again and called out, “Enough already!”

They both looked down at me as though they'd forgotten I was there, and then they quickly dropped to the floor and sheathed their wings.

"I can see I can learn a lot from both of you," I said, glancing between the two of them. "I'd like both of you to train me."

They shot each other wary looks before returning their attention to me. "Fine." They spoke in unison, but I wasn't sure how much unity we'd have. Still, we would try.

After all, it was my destiny to straddle the line between the angel and demon worlds, like Olivia. This would be my first test.

When I got back to the penthouse, all I wanted was a long shower and a bite to eat. What I got was Lucifer sitting at his piano, playing a haunting melody that had me lingering in the doorway so I could better take it in.

He looked up at me and paused, his fingers lightly resting on the piano keys. His suit jacket was missing, and his shirt collar looked like he'd yanked it open after a long, hard day of work. My eyes were drawn to that bit of revealed skin, yearning to press my lips there.

"Come here."

His sharp command echoed through the otherwise silent room. Heat pooled between my thighs, and I found myself walking toward him as if in a dream, unable to stop myself. I held my breath as I got closer and closer, the anticipation making my pulse race, especially with the way he looked at me—like he might devour me at any moment.

When I stood before him in front of the piano, I became all too aware of what I must look like in my tight workout clothes, my hair a mess from training, my cheeks pink from exertion...and now from desire.

"I'm all sweaty," I said softly. A feeble protest, and we both knew it. "I need a shower."

"Not yet."

His hand gripped my arm, then he drew me toward him and dragged me into his lap, with my back against his chest. My breath hitched at the sudden close contact, and how he pulled my hair to the side to press his mouth against my neck in a hot, feverish kiss. His hands slid all along my

body, feeling every inch of me through the tight clothes, moving across my breasts, my hips, my thighs.

Then he gripped my leggings and yanked them down roughly, probably ripping them in a few places. His other hand held my breast, rubbing his thumb along the taut nipple, an effective way to hold me in place. I was caught in the devil's grasp, and he made sure I knew there was no escape. Not tonight.

My panties were torn off my next, making me gasp. Lucifer forced me to spread my legs, his hands rough and demanding until he found how wet he'd made me already. I could only lean back against him and moan as his fingers slid into my pussy easily. He had me completely under his control as he fingered me and kneaded my breasts, teasing out little gasps of pleasure from me when his thumb stroked my clit.

I closed my eyes and allowed myself to melt into the moment. I shoved away all the pain and the anxiety from the past few days and accepted his touch. Fuck, I needed this so bad. I needed *him*.

He quickly and silently brought me to orgasm, making my hips thrust against his fingers desperately as he wrung out every last second of pleasure. I felt his hard cock pressed against my ass through the fabric of his trousers, and wondered if he would free it now and take me like his, with me sitting on his lap. Or maybe he'd bend me over the piano. Or press me down against the hard marble floor. I didn't care how, really. I just wanted his cock inside me already.

"No matter how much you hate me, you're mine, Hannah," Lucifer said, his mouth right by my ear. "Every inch of you." His hand slid over my pussy, like he was claiming it. "Now and forever."

Then he let me go.

I rose to my feet, my knees a bit shaky, and turned to look at him in confusion. He stood and let his hungry eyes linger on my half-naked body, which was aching for him to continue. He knew it too. I could tell by the wicked grin he gave me.

"Go take your shower," he said, as he kissed me on the cheek. "I have business to attend to, but I'll see you tomorrow."

He adjusted the cuffs on his shirt and then walked away. Just like that. Leaving me desperately wanting more.

LUCIFER



I took Hannah's hand as we stepped through a door that led us outside, to the grounds of The Celestial.

"Where are we going?" Hannah asked with a huff.

"You'll see soon enough."

I could tell she was annoyed at me for last night, but I loved seeing Hannah all fired up about something, and I'd rather her annoyed than sad.

Besides, she wasn't really annoyed. She was *hungry*. For me.

Exactly how I wanted her.

We walked past the paths to the resort's different pool and recreation areas, and I could hear the sounds of my guests enjoying themselves all around us, while the hot sun beat against my skin. Eventually, we reached an area that was fenced off, and I used a key to open the gate. Hannah shot me a confused look, before stepping through to the empty lot on the other side. Flat land stretched before us, most of it dirt with a few sad little weeds sticking out of it, along with some trash and tumbleweeds blowing in the breeze.

I spread my arms wide. "This is my gift to you."

She cocked her head. "Um, thanks?"

I laughed at her bewildered expression. "I bought this land a few months ago so I could add another pool area to The Celestial, but I've decided we have enough pools. What I think we really need is a garden."

"A garden?" Hannah asked, perking up immediately.

"Your garden."

She sucked in a breath. "Really?"

“I want you to design it. Something huge and impressive, the kind of garden that people can wander through for hours. A tranquil respite in the middle of the desert.” I watched her face as she gazed across the empty lot, her blue eyes dancing with excitement. “I know you had to leave your flower shop behind, but here you can still work with plants, and this time you can create something that’s completely your own.”

She threw her arms around me, which was a better response than I’d hoped for. “Thank you. I think this is the best present anyone has ever given me.”

“I don’t know, I’ve given you some pretty impressive gifts over the years,” I said with a grin, before capturing her mouth in a kiss. She slid her arms around my neck and pressed against me, a bit urgently. Still wanting more from last night, though she tried to contain it. My cock strained against my trousers too, begging me to take her right here in the dirt, like an animal. But I was nothing if not patient.

“How did you know?” she asked, looking up at me, still in my arms.

“Know what?”

“That I was already missing the flower shop and wondering how I would fill that void in my life.”

I slowly brushed my thumb across her lower lip. “Because I know you better than I know even myself. You’ve always loved gardens, ever since I got you kicked out of one as Eve.” I smirked at the memory. “As Persephone you had the power to make plants grow and to bend them to your will. You transformed our palace in Hell from a cold, barren manor to a home filled with life and color. I knew if you could do that, you’d be able to work magic on this plot of land too.”

She turned in my arms, leaning back against me, as she considered the lot. “We can call it Persephone’s Garden.”

“Perfect.” I’d never understood nor much cared about plants or flowers, but I’d always loved the way her face lit up around them. “You can already picture it, can’t you?”

“Yes, although I want to sit down and brainstorm some ideas before I get started. I can’t wait.”

“I’ll have someone get you the dimensions of the lot so you can get to work on it. The Celestial has a landscaping team, so all you need to do is tell them what you want, and they’ll work with you to make it happen.”

“Thank you.” She rested her head against my chest, letting me hold her close. “I really love it.”

“And I love you.”

She didn’t say it back, but that was all right. A part of her was still upset with me. Maybe it would always be upset with me. But most of her was coming around.

Hannah spent the rest of the day training with the angels, which was fine because I had business of my own to deal with. Samael's people were still on the hunt for Gadreel, while our other spies sought information about the Archdemons. In today’s report, I learned that Valefar had returned to Hong Kong and declared himself Archdemon of the dragons. My spies said he had no further plans to move against me at this time, and I hoped he’d taken my advice. If not, we’d be ready to go to war with the dragons. A war we would undoubtedly win.

In the evening, Hannah joined me in the penthouse for supper. There were a dozen restaurants in The Celestial, and I owned even more across The Strip, but Hannah always loved it when I cooked for her. Besides, I wanted her alone for what I had planned.

“You won’t win me back by cooking for me.” She took another bite of the meal with a soft sigh. “Even if this is the best steak I’ve ever had.”

Watching her savor the meal I'd prepared was its own kind of foreplay. “We both know I don't need to win you back. I’m your destiny. You’re my fate.” I lowered my voice, as I locked eyes with her. "In many of your lives you’ve tried to resist me, but it never works. You always succumb eventually. As you will now."

Hannah shook her head, but she didn’t argue. How could she? She'd already given in.

With a smug little smile, I sliced off another piece of filet mignon, which I'd cooked in a peppercorn sauce. Beside it were rosemary roasted potatoes with a touch of onion, and broccolini sauteed in garlic. "How is your training going so far? I didn't have time to ask you last night. I had...other things on my mind."

Heat rose to her cheeks at the reminder of our encounter at the piano. "It's going well. I'm starting to remember more about myself, and I'm gaining control of my powers."

"Good." I took a sip of red wine. "I meant to ask, what would you like me to call you? Hannah? Haniel? Eve, perhaps?"

"I'm sticking with Hannah. I don't feel like I'm really Haniel anymore after all this time." She dropped her eyes to her food. "Of course, Hannah was created by Jophiel, so I'm not really her either. I'm honestly not sure who I am anymore."

"You do know who you are. You always have, deep down. No matter what name you go by, the true essence of who you are never changes." I reached across the table to take her hand. "I've found you hundreds of times, and your soul is always the same. Jophiel might have created a fake life for you, but your true self still crept into every single aspect of it. Your affinity with plants and flowers. Your love of books and history. Your commitment to honesty and truth. In every life, going all the way back to Eve, you had a light inside you that made the world better for everyone around you. Losing your memories could never take that away."

She blew out a breath and squeezed my hand. "I suppose you're right. I just wish I didn't feel so damn confused all the time, and so out of place. Am I an angel? A Fallen? Am I on the side of the angels or the demons?"

"You're on the side of peace, as you always have been." I paused as I considered my next words. "When Jophiel returned my memories, it filled in a lot of gaps in my past. Do you remember when you came to me as Haniel, and how much you hated me? But then we had long talks about the war, and about how it was destroying both angels and demons. We each saw that it couldn't continue, or both species would be wiped out. You convinced me to swallow my pride and try to end the war for the good of my people, even if I didn't think it was possible. You urged me to work with Michael and try to come to a truce. And I did. Even after you were taken from me, after I had no memory of Haniel, I ended the war." I leaned forward, as she hung onto my every word. "Jophiel might've been able to erase my memories of you, but not how you affected me. You changed me, Hannah. Part of you was still with me, even if I couldn't remember."

That got a faint smile out of my lovely mate. "I'm still impressed you managed to end the war. I know how hard that must have been. And from

what Olivia told me, you've been working to make sure the peace lasts too."

I sat back and picked up my wine glass, swirling the dark liquid inside. "I've done what I can to protect my people, and peace has been beneficial for both sides. Though it was painful to leave Hell behind, our population is increasing again now that we're living on Earth. For whatever reason, it's easier for immortals to have children in this realm. For that benefit alone we must maintain the peace."

Sadness touched Hannah's brow at the mention of children, but then her eyes took on a look of determination. "Then that's what I'll dedicate the rest of my life to—keeping that peace. After I deal with Adam, anyway. Do you know where he might have gone, or what his plans are?"

"I have my suspicions, though we haven't found him yet." I watched Hannah's expression, debating whether she was ready to hear this, before deciding there could be no more secrets between us. "The ancient journals he took were Samael's accounts of things that happened to us in the early days, when you were Eve and I had just left Heaven to rule Hell. It contained information about the curse, along with many other things... Including the locations of the Four Horsemen and how to release them."

"The Four Horsemen?" Hannah's jaw dropped, her fork dangling uselessly from her fingers. "They're real, too?"

She said *too* like she'd only just started believing in angels and demons, and I wondered if telling her this was a mistake. "Unfortunately, yes. How much do you remember about the Elder Gods?"

She stared off into space as she searched her memories. "Not very much. They're ancient, powerful beings who created all the races and the different realms. But I don't remember what happened to them."

"Their children—angels, demons, humans, and fae—rebelled against them, as all children do in the end. It was the first war I fought in, back when I was an angel. The Elder Gods eventually retreated to another realm called Void. All except four of them. Pestilence. War. Famine." My mouth twisted in distaste. "And Death."

"Death..." Hannah whispered. "He's the one who cursed us."

Though I hated discussing this, I was pleased she was finally remembering her life as Eve, even if in only tiny snippets. "Yes. My father."

Her eyes widened at that. "Death is your father?"

"Indeed." Bringing up my father demanded another glass of wine, I decided, before I poured one for both of us. "He's gone by Death, the Grim Reaper, Thanatos, and many other names throughout history. Adam was always his favored human, and I was always a disappointment. Too much like my mother, Aurora, he always said. He thought it amusing to curse you in order to torment me for all eternity."

"But now you've broken the curse."

"Yes." I raised my glass to that. "Once again, I've defeated him."

She arched an eyebrow. "Once again?"

"After the other Elder Gods left, the Four Horsemen began destroying the realms of Earth, Heaven, Hell, and Faerie as punishment for our rebellion. A group of us, gathered from all the different races, fought and defeated them. Since it's impossible to truly kill an Elder God, we buried the Four Horsemen in secret locations across the realms of Earth, Heaven, Hell, and Faerie, and four of us—you, me, Archangel Michael, and High King Oberon—used our blood to seal their tombs." I scowled and finished off my wine. "I believe Adam and the Archdemons plan to release them now."

"Why?" she asked. "Why would they even consider doing that?"

"They know it's the only way they can defeat me." I shot her a wry smile. "None of the Archdemons are strong enough. They need the power of the Four Horsemen to take me down."

She took a bite of her potatoes chewing slowly, and then asked, "If the Four Horsemen are released, is that the beginning of the apocalypse? Like in the Bible?"

"Possibly. They nearly destroyed all four realms before we managed to stop them. I can't imagine what destruction they would unleash now after thousands of years in a tomb." My jaw clenched. "And even if the other Horsemen are released, we absolutely cannot allow my father to walk the worlds again."

"What can we do to stop it?" Hannah asked, her face pale.

"The Horsemen must be released in the order we sealed them, just as it says in the Bible. That means Pestilence is first. I've already sent people to that location to watch for any sign of Adam or the Archdemons. When they make their move, we'll be ready to stop them."

She nodded, though I could see our discussion was weighing heavily on her mind. It was a lot to lay at her feet, but I wanted her to know

everything now. No secrets. No lies. No reason for us to be apart.

At some point during our discussion we'd finished our meal, and I rose to my feet and crossed over to her, offering my hand. "Come with me."

Her delicate fingers reluctantly slid into mine. "Where to?"

"We're going flying."

HANNAH



I dragged my feet as Lucifer led me outside to the edge of the balcony overlooking The Strip below. The thought of flying again made me nervous for some reason. Maybe because as I stared off the side of the building, I remembered the time I'd nearly plummeted to my death. My wings would have really come in handy then, I thought bitterly.

Or maybe it was because allowing my wings out and using them to fly meant accepting the truth about who I was. Not a human, but an angel. Something I hadn't even believed existed until a few weeks ago.

Or maybe it was because the thought of flying reminded me too much of that terrifying, confusing night when I'd been resurrected, when nothing had made sense and all I'd wanted was to escape.

"Have you flown since the night you regained your wings?" Lucifer asked, as if he knew exactly what was going through my mind.

"No." I shook my head, backing away slowly. "I can't."

He gently pulled me back to the edge of the balcony. "The longer you wait, the harder it will become."

I swallowed hard, knowing he was right. Every time I backed down from flying, it would become a much more daunting task. I had to rip the bandage off and just do it already, but that was easier said than done.

"Trust me," Lucifer said. "I won't let anything bad happen to you."

"Other than kill me?" I asked, before I could stop myself.

"It worked out in the end, didn't it?" His cocky smirk made me want to smack him over the head. "If I hadn't done that, you wouldn't have your powers or your wings now."

"Did you know that would happen?" I asked, staring hard at him. "You had your memories back then. You knew I was really an angel."

"I suspected rebirth would return you to your angelic state, yes, but there was no way to know for sure. I considered it an added bonus to breaking the curse."

"Still not okay," I muttered, shaking my head.

Lucifer's wings suddenly unfurled behind him, so dark they made the night sky look bright. The area around us darkened slightly, as if the shadows were drawn to his power. In his three-piece suit, with his wings spread, he radiated danger and masculinity like no other man in this world, or any other. There was no doubt when looking upon him that he was the monster spoken of in every dark tale throughout history. The devil himself.

"I believe it's time to show me yours," he said, and I realized I'd been staring.

After a moment's hesitation, I let my wings out, my silver feathers expanding at my back, eager to be freed. It felt good to let them out—like taking off a bra at the end of the day.

"Beautiful," Lucifer said, as he reached out to lightly brush one of my feathers. "Look how you light up the night sky. My bright star."

His touch sent a shiver through me. Among angels, touching another's wings was an intimate act only done among family or lovers. That much I remembered, and yet I didn't pull away. Not when he looked at me like I was his entire world.

I tore my gaze away from him and stared down at the bright lights of The Strip. I could do this. I could. I'd already flown once, without even realizing I could do it. How much harder could it be now?

Lucifer took my hand and drew my eyes back to him. His quiet confidence lent me some strength, and I nodded to signal I was ready. Together we leaped off the balcony, spreading our wings wide, and though my heart leaped into my throat, Lucifer's firm grip on my hand kept me from panicking. Wind caught my feathers and kept me aloft, and then instinct took over and I flapped my wings, taking me higher.

A laugh escaped my chest as we began to soar over The Strip, gazing down on the cars and casinos below. Lucifer had taken me on a flying tour of the city before, but he'd had to carry me then. Now I reveled in being able to fly by myself. The feeling was strange and yet so familiar, and like

fighting, it came back to me easily. My body remembered, even if my mind struggled with it.

Lucifer flew alongside me, and somewhere over The Strip, it changed to a game of cat and mouse. One moment it was him chasing me, then I was chasing him. We laughed our way around loops of the tallest casinos, his darkness keeping us hidden from view.

Then Lucifer caught me, pulling me into his arms, holding me tight against his chest. My heart beat so rapidly, it seemed to pound throughout both our bodies. I caught my breath as I looked at him, drowning in his roguish green eyes—the eyes I'd loved as long as I could remember.

Slowly, so slowly years could have passed, Lucifer lowered his head. His mouth found mine, and heat rippled through me as he grazed his tongue across my lips, demanding to be let in. I sucked in a gasp as he gained entry and kissed me hard, his arms tightening around me, his black wings moving slowly to keep us midair.

When he raised his head, his smoldering gaze made my breath hitch with desire. He suddenly shot forward, carrying me through the air toward The Celestial at a speed no mortal could match. Wind tickled my heated skin as we flew through the night, and when we reached the penthouse, Lucifer reached out with tendrils of darkness and yanked open the sliding door to his bedroom.

We landed inside and he set me down on the floor. Before I could even protest, he gripped my black dress and yanked it off me. I'd purposefully chosen that one because it could come off easily, and I wore nothing underneath. The arrogant, satisfied grin on his lips told me he knew why too.

There was no hiding it. I craved him. Desperately. Last night had been like a delicious appetizer, but now I was ready for the main course.

His eyes raked over my naked body as I stood before him, and my nipples hardened in response. Then he stalked toward me, making me take a step back, and then another, until my back hit the wall. Right where he wanted me.

He took my chin and kissed me hard, holding me in place while he thoroughly seduced my mouth. Then his mouth danced across my skin, down my neck, teasing his way to my shoulders, and then my breasts. He spent some time there, licking and sucking, making me moan, before he

continued his path downward. To my belly. To my hips. To the triangle between my legs.

He nudged my legs wider, his large hands gripping my thighs, before his mouth found my pussy and claimed it with a swift brush of his tongue. With a soft groan, I leaned back against the wall for support, my knees suddenly weak.

He looked up at me and met my eyes. "Admit it. This is where you want me. On my knees. Groveling at your feet. My tongue in your pussy."

"Yes," I cried out, as I dug my fingers into his thick dark hair and pulled his face back between my thighs.

He hoisted me up, putting my legs around his shoulders, giving him better access as he thoroughly devoured my pussy like a starving man. He fucked me with his tongue and sucked on my clit, and I was powerless to do anything but hang on and ride his face, my hips thrusting wildly. My climax came upon me like a tidal wave, and I yelled his name as the pleasure crested over me.

Then he stood up and dropped me down in one fluid motion, catching me in his arms, wrapping my legs around his hips. His cock entered me hard and fast, making me gasp at the sudden breach. He pressed me back against the wall, hands on either side of my head, and I clung to his shoulders as he pounded into me. His hips pounded against me, slamming me back against the wall, his cock thrusting deep in a relentless pace. He fucked me like he wanted to become one with me, like he couldn't stop until he'd marked me inside and out. He needed this as much as I did, I realized—this connection, this confirmation that we were still mates, no matter what happened between us. I felt the mate bond thrumming between us, invisible and yet so powerful it couldn't be denied, and I threw my head back and gave myself up to Lucifer completely.

My pussy clenched around his cock as I came, and then he let out a guttural roar and slammed his cock deep into me. I felt his hot seed fill me, and he kissed me hard as we both shuddered with release. I held him tight, kissing him back, squeezing my thighs around his hips so he couldn't leave me just yet.

I rested my head back against the wall and sighed at him. "This doesn't mean I forgive you."

Lucifer carried me over to his bed and set me down on it. "You don't need to forgive me. But from now on you *will* sleep in my bed."

I bristled at his words. "I have my own room."

"The other room will still be yours to do with as you please. And then, every night, you'll return here to me. We both know you sleep better beside me, anyway. " He flipped me over onto my stomach, and then entered me again from behind, his hands rough on my ass and his cock already hard again. He bent over and said right into my ear, "You can hate me. You can fight me. You can punish me. But you will do it by my side. As my queen."

Any protest I might have made was lost as he claimed me over and over, all night long.

HANNAH



With a sigh, I plopped into my favorite chair in the library. It was my favorite place in the penthouse to relax, and after that training session, damn, I deserved a break. I'd fought Azazel and Callan together for the first time, and they'd kicked my ass. But we'd all known it wasn't actually a fair fight—at least not yet. There would come a day when I'd take them on and beat them, I was certain of it. Alas, that day was definitely not today.

I shifted and groaned, wishing my angelic healing would hurry up already. I'd landed hard on the roof, courtesy of Zel's enthusiasm, and if I'd been human I probably would have broken something. At the very least I would have sported a nice bruise, but because I was an angel, I only had some temporary discomfort while my body healed itself. One of the best perks of immortality for sure.

It had been a week since I'd returned to Las Vegas, and Zel and Callan now had to work really hard for their wins during our combat practice. My other training was going well too. Olivia helped me remember different aspects of angel and demon history and culture, while also getting me up to date on all the changes that had happened in the last forty years. Bastien taught me to regain control of my powers, and I annoyed everyone by reading their auras whenever I saw them. Lucifer's was especially intriguing to me, since the ring around his was as black as night, except for a few traces of light that shined through.

After that night with Lucifer, I turned the guest room into my office and personal space, and in my free time I began drawing up plans for

Persephone's Garden. Every time I worked on it my excitement grew, and I couldn't wait to start ordering plants and really getting to work. My true self was starting to surface, and I felt more complete than I'd felt in several years—probably since the last time Jophiel had wiped my memory. I was Haniel mixed with Lenore, Persephone, Eve, and many more. A new Hannah, one I created myself.

I stood and walked around the room, trailing my fingers over the spines of the many books, but none called to me today. I came to a halt in front of the sword I'd grabbed from the wall and used against the gargoyles who'd invaded this space not long ago. Muscle memory had kicked in on that night, and I'd fought and defeated them like I was born to do it. I hadn't known then that I *was* born to do it

The sword seemed to call to me as I looked at it. I plucked it off the wall, enjoying the weight and craftsmanship, the perfect balance as I held it, so familiar from hundreds of years during which I'd clasped it in my hand. Morningstar. Lucifer's sword from when he was an angel.

As I balanced its weight and adopted a fighter's pose, something nudged at the edge of my thoughts, and I studied the sword, turning my hand so it gleamed and reflected the lights in the room. At a mental push, a mere urge, it pulsed with darkness, the only sword in existence infused with both light and dark power.

It responded to Lucifer's power. Only he could wield it. Lucifer...and me.

As I practiced with the sword, slicing it through the air, running through the familiar series of exercises and remembering what it felt like to fight with it, I lost track of time. Until Kassiel walked into the room.

My youngest son stopped short, staring at me with something like shock.

"Kassiel! It's so good to see you again." I lowered the blade and offered him a smile. I hadn't seen him since that first meeting, and I was eager to talk to him again, but he looked wary. Almost like he didn't want to see me. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, sorry. It's just strange seeing you in this body, holding the sword my mother wielded against angels." He raked a hand through his almost-black hair. "I only knew you as Lenore, and though Father told me about the curse and your reincarnation, I've never experienced it personally. I never met you as Haniel. Until now, anyway."

My heart broke a little at his words. I was essentially a stranger telling him I was his mother. He hadn't known me in over a century. How could I blame him for being hesitant? I'd lived the last forty years with no memories of having any children, so I didn't feel much like a mother either. I silently raged at the curse, and at Adam, and at Jophiel. They hadn't only kept me from Lucifer. They'd kept me from my sons too.

I wanted to reach out to Kassiel, but I stopped myself. He didn't seem ready for that yet. I sighed and set down Morningstar. "When I was Haniel, I wanted to see you, more than you can imagine, but my relationship with Lucifer had to be kept secret at that time. We made plans to tell you, but then Adam found me."

"I understand." He smiled, but it looked a bit forced.

I sat in one of the chairs and gestured for him to join me, hoping he would allow me a few moments with him to try to rebuild our relationship. "How are you? How have you been? I'm sorry that I missed so many years."

"It's not your fault." Kassiel slowly sat in the other chair, his movements graceful, every aspect of him reminding me so much of his father. "After Mother's—*your* death—I changed my mind about the war. I pleaded with Father for a truce with the angels, but he wasn't ready to listen yet. The war didn't end for many years after that, but I never stopped working toward it, even as I acted as a spy for Lucifer."

I let Kassiel keep talking, wanting to hear him, to just listen to his voice. My love for my son was so overwhelming it felt like it might burst out of my chest. How had I gone the last forty years without this feeling? And how did mothers live with this every day and not go insane? Or maybe we all were a little insane, but it didn't matter, because it was worth it. It was all worth it.

"Most recently I became a professor at Seraphim Academy on a mission for Lucifer, and with Olivia and the others, I helped stop a plot against demons," he said.

"Yes, Olivia told me all about it." I reached over and took Kassiel's hand, and to my relief he didn't pull away. "I'm so proud of you."

"What of you?" he asked, seeming a bit more comfortable now. "Tell me about this life. Lucifer gave me a quick rundown, but I want to hear it from you."

I bit out a sad laugh. "There's really not much to tell."

We talked for the next hour about our lives, catching up as if we were old friends, and I was delighted to hear that Kassiel shared my love of reading and history. In fact, he'd been the Angelic History professor at Seraphim Academy, which greatly amused both of us. I told him about my flower shop, and what Jophiel had done to me, and he told me about how he and Callan had hated each other for a long time. Of course, back then they'd had no idea they were basically cousins.

"What of your brothers?" I asked, hungry for more news of my sons. "Do you see them a lot?"

Kassiel shifted in his seat, looking uncomfortable again. "Not very often. Damien and I get together when we can, but he's in Faerie and outsiders are not welcome there. And Belial... I haven't spoken to him in years. Last I heard he's working as a bartender in New Orleans and laying low. Probably a good thing."

I frowned a little at that. I was beginning to realize my family was larger than I'd ever imagined as Hannah, but I sensed our family had grown distant and estranged, a side-effect of the curse, perhaps. But with the loss of my daughter so fresh in my mind, and the promise of one long, unbroken life ahead of me, I was desperate to reconnect with all of my sons and bring them together again.

After night fell, I decided to take a short swim in the infinity pool. It had been out there on the balcony all this time, tempting me with its cool waters, but for various reasons I hadn't taken a swim yet. On my shopping spree with Lucifer—which seemed like a lifetime ago—he'd picked out some skimpy little bikinis I would normally have been too shy to wear, but now I wore one confidently. Knowing who you truly were had a way of bolstering your self image.

Lucifer walked outside, carrying two drinks that looked fruity and fun, with little pink umbrellas in them. "I thought you could use a little refreshment."

I swam to the edge and took a drink from him. "Thanks."

"You deserve it. You've been working hard with the angels all week." A naughty grin crossed his lips. "And I've been working you hard after that."

I splashed him a little, rolling my eyes, even though his words made heat dance across my skin. All he did was chuckle and step back to avoid the water, and then he began slowly unbuttoning his shirt. As he revealed inch after inch of perfect skin and hard muscle, it was hard to concentrate on his next words.

"Tomorrow I plan to visit two of the Archdemons—Baal and Lilith—on a diplomatic mission to find out if the Lilim and vampires are working against me with the other demons."

I took a sip of my drink, tasting the alcohol and the pineapple. "Probably a good idea."

He unbuttoned his trousers next, but his gaze remained on me the entire time. "I'd like you to join me."

"I'm not sure how much use I'll be." After all, I was still learning my place in the demon world, and I wasn't sure it would help Lucifer's cause if he showed up with an angel on his arm.

"You might not be sure, but I am. I'm stronger with you by my side. I've always appreciated your advice and wisdom." His slacks fell to the ground, leaving him in tight black boxer briefs that did nothing to hide his impressive package. "We're a pair. Dark and light, wrong and right, day and night. For all eternity."

He dove into the infinity pool on the far side, where the water seemed to disappear over the side of The Celestial. Watching him was a luxury, with his waist narrowing from broad shoulders, and his taut stomach rippling with muscle. He plunged below the water and his form wavered beneath the surface as he swam in my direction.

He burst up in front of me, tossing his head back, his dark hair gleaming under the stars. Water ran in rivulets over his broad shoulders and down his hard chest, and I couldn't tear my gaze from his body. Everything about Lucifer called to me, making him impossible to resist.

"Well?" His rich voice sounded by my ear, and his wet skin brushed over mine.

I sucked in a breath as a rush of desire caught me by surprise. What had we been talking about? Oh, right. Going to see some Archdemons. "Yes, I will go with you."

"Good. I need you with me, Hannah." He moved closer and took hold of my hip. "And I want you. Now."

Desire shot through me, and the fire in Lucifer's eyes only strengthened it. He tilted my chin up, then his mouth came crashing down. I pressed against him, urgency thrumming a second heartbeat in my body, pushing unrelenting waves of desire through me. He drew a sharp inhale at the touch of my tongue against his lip and I pushed farther into his mouth, touching against the delicate skin there.

He wrapped his arms around me and crushed me to him, and the halter top of my bikini loosened before falling away. "Oops," he murmured against my mouth.

"Why, lord and master of Hell, what *do* you think you're doing?" I asked.

"Needing you... Wanting you..." He loosened the ties at either side of my bikini bottoms. "Having you."

His eyes darkened with lust as his hand slid over my ass to cup the left cheek, and he kneaded it slightly. I all but melted against him as I drew heavier breaths.

"Touch me, Hannah," he commanded, as he dropped his head to press his lips to my neck, soft open-mouthed kisses scorching me, searing his touch onto me, making me his.

I shivered and the water rippled around us as I slid my hand between our bodies. My bikini drifted farther away, but I didn't care. I touched Lucifer's abs, smoothing my way over the dips and ridges of the muscles there, and he inhaled a breath, far from unaffected by my touch. I paused, listening to the stuttered rhythm of his breathing, and he rumbled a growl of discontentment.

"Don't stop." He pushed his hips toward me, and the hard bulge in his boxer briefs jutted against my stomach. I arched my neck, giving better access for his kisses. His tongue flickered out in a lazy trail toward my collarbone.

I teased my fingers along his waistband, slipping them beneath it as he nibbled and nipped my skin. His hand slipped to my thigh, and I automatically widened my stance as my body begged for more. I groaned before I crashed my lips to his as I gripped his cock through the thin fabric.

He moaned and responded by pressing his hand between my legs, his fingers brushing my clit too fleetingly before he covered the area with his

palm. He drew away and looked into my eyes. "Mine. It's always been mine."

I nodded, hoping my desperation for him didn't show on my face. I could barely hold still. I wanted to grind against him, and I pushed his boxer briefs down his thighs, freeing his glorious cock.

"Your pride's on display again," I said.

He chuckled as he looked down between us. "I better do something about that."

He grabbed my lips and lifted me against him, the water buoying me up so I could wrap my legs over his hips. I ground against him, bearing down just a touch. Fresh heat blazed through his eyes as he pressed himself against my entrance. Then he thrust upward, the movement so fast, I blew out a breath of surprise.

I ground down again, releasing a sigh as my body stretched around him. He groaned and pushed deep, filling me completely before setting a steady rhythm that rubbed me in all the right ways. The water lapping around us was strangely erotic, moving in time with our bodies as we joined together in this ancient, primal dance.

Lucifer leaned forward, supporting my ass with one hand as he gripped the edge of the pool behind me with the other. Something about his shift in position changed his angle and I groaned as heat pooled low in my belly.

My gasps became rapid pants, each more ragged than the last as I tried to brace against an onslaught of sensation building inside me until I couldn't fight it anymore. I clamped my thighs around him as I melted to nothing in his arms, feeling like I was the water from the pool, cascading down over the sides of the building. I rode my orgasm for as long as I could until the pulsing of my body brought Lucifer to climax too.

Lucifer dropped his head forward, his forehead resting against mine. "Do you forgive me yet?"

"No," I replied, though I didn't put much conviction in the word. I still wasn't sure if forgiveness was possible, but I'd stopped hating him, and my anger had faded. I understood more of why he'd killed me, and a part of me was secretly grateful. He'd restored me to my true self and broken the curse, giving us the possibility for true happiness for the first time in our ancient lives. I only wish it had happened differently. But that was true of so many things in my past.

"You will." Lucifer smirked as he ran his hands slowly up my arms.
"You can kill me next if it will make you feel better."

I shoved him back with a laugh. "Don't tempt me, or I might take you up on that."

LUCIFER



I stepped out of the limo in front of Baal's mansion in upstate New York as the sun slipped behind it. The dark, gothic mansion was impressive in the waning light, the turrets reaching high toward the emerging stars, the wrought-iron gates both beguiling and unwelcoming. It was exactly what one might expect from a vampire king. The kind of place a soul could get lost in. I wouldn't have been at all surprised to find a graveyard around the back and a belfry of bats nearby.

I straightened my cuffs and glanced around, then reached out to help Hannah from the limo. She wore a long silver gown with the emerald necklace and earrings I'd gotten her on our first shopping spree, and it pleased me to see her finally wearing them. A sign she'd accepted her place as my queen.

She looked up at the mansion and bit her lip nervously, but I had complete faith in her. She'd always had diplomacy and astute business sense before in her many lifetimes as my queen. Those weren't qualities that would leave her just because she was still making the right connections in her memories.

A handsome male vampire in a suit opened the door for us and gestured us inside with a low bow. Another vampire in a suit brought in our bags from the limo, then whisked them off to our guest room. I had to give the older vampires credit for their hospitality, if nothing else.

Lilith stepped into the foyer to greet us, wearing a long gown the color of blood with a high slit up the thigh, her curves alluring because she

couldn't wear them any other way. "Welcome! I'm so pleased you could join us. It's lovely to see you both."

She went to Hannah first, and kissed her on the cheeks. My mate smiled warmly and said, "Thank you for inviting us into your home. It's lovely."

Lilith laughed at that as she moved toward me. "It's not my home, but I appreciate the sentiment anyway."

"Lilith." I leaned forward to accept her cheek-kisses and touched her shoulder briefly. "I'm surprised to see you shacking up with Baal. You've never lived in one place for long."

"I'm only staying here because of Lena. She needed us after she and Ekariel were rescued from that horrid cult." Lilith shuddered a little, and I sensed the depths of pain in her voice. She'd spent years searching for her daughter, who went missing as a child, but once she found her, the girl was in bad shape after being in captivity so long. Baal had even resigned from his position as headmaster of Hellspawn Academy to help care for her.

"How is she doing now?" I took Hannah's hand in mine, reminding myself she was beside me, drawing some strength from her presence.

"Better." Lilith led us down a long hallway, this one only marginally less opulent than the grand entrance hall. "She no longer screams every night. Small victories."

"Glad to hear it." I sensed the mood needed to be lightened, and gave her a devilish grin. "And tell me, are you rekindling your old flame with Baal while you're here?"

Lilith's soft laughter echoed through the hall. "I do need to feed, naturally."

I raised an eyebrow. "And Gabriel?"

She lifted her chin with a secretive smile. "The Archangel does come to visit me from time to time."

"I knew it." I leaned over to Hannah and spoke in a low voice, as if sharing a secret. "Lilith and Gabriel had a secret affair years ago, resulting in Olivia. It seems to have started up again."

Hannah's eyes danced with amusement. "How scandalous. I wonder how many other secret relationships happened over the years between angels and demons."

"Oh, plenty." Lilith winked at Hannah. "Gabriel was certainly not my first angel, but we succubi do like to sample a wide variety of delights."

"If you're seeing Baal and Gabriel, that means you'll only need one or two more to be satisfied," I said. "Might I suggest Samael for one of the open positions?"

Lilith sighed. "Samael is angry with me for granting Asmodeus's wish to become mortal."

I lifted a shoulder in a casual shrug. "He'll get over it."

"He doesn't understand that it was difficult for me too. I don't want to see my son grow old and die." Lilith sashayed across a finely tiled floor as an impressive conservatory rose above us, the leaded glass windows dark at this time of day, with a mixture of floral and fruited scents hanging in the air. "But ultimately I want whatever makes Asmodeus happy, and I have to respect his decisions."

"For what it's worth, he does seem very happy with Brandy and her family," Hannah said.

"Ah, the things we do for our children," Lilith said with a sad smile.

We walked through a final doorway and out into an impressive garden. Winding paths led between mature bushes lit by tiny fairy lights, and candles hung in jars here and there. Night-blooming flowers filled the space with sweet scents, and tiny white blooms cascaded over a gazebo.

Hannah squeezed my hand tightly as she looked around. "It's magical."

Lilith only flashed a small smile of acknowledgment before she led us toward the gazebo, where a table and four chairs had been arranged, with candlelit wine already waiting for us. We all took seats around the table, and I poured us each a glass of wine.

"How are you, Hannah?" Lilith asked. "I see you've become an angel since we last met, but I won't hold that against you, I promise."

Hannah flushed. "Yes, it was a surprise, but I'm finding my way."

Lilith leaned forward and rested her hand over Hannah's. "I have no doubt you will. I'm sure you've discovered your son and my daughter are now an item. That makes us practically family."

"Yes, Kassiel and Olivia seem to complement each other well," Hannah said, but then she bit her lip. "I'm hoping to connect more with my sons. It's been so long since I last saw them, I feel like I don't know them at all anymore. And they don't know me either."

"I understand," Lilith said. "I've only recently reconnected with my daughters after years of being apart." She paused as if searching for the right words, her gaze far away as she looked out into the darkness beyond

the gazebo. "It will take you some time, and it will be difficult, but it will also be worth it."

Before Hannah could continue the conversation, Baal emerged from the house, drawing our attention. He looked like a vampire from an old movie with long black hair, cold blue eyes, and sharp cheekbones.

"Welcome to my home," he said with a formal British accent, his gesture vast as he encompassed the house and gardens, his smile wide. He gave me a slight bow. "I'm pleased to have you here."

I nodded. "And we thank you for your hospitality, Baal."

As he sat down, he made another gesture with his hand and a man in a tuxedo brought out a cart laden with covered dishes, as if he'd been waiting behind a rhododendron all along. The aromas of well-cooked food overtook the delicate floral fragrances, and the waiter served a mixture of perfect vegetables and steak before quietly taking his leave.

When we were alone again with plates full of delectable food, I cleared my throat. "There's no point in pretending. As nice as all this pomp and ceremony is, I'm here to find out if you're involved with the other Archdemons in the conspiracy to overthrow me. I know you've long harbored thoughts of taking my place as the Demon King."

Baal let out a low chuckle. "Ah, Lucifer. I do appreciate how you've come straight to the point. Yes, in the past I planned to move against you, but not anymore. Your son helped rescue my daughter. I will not forget that." His gaze strayed back to Lilith, full of obvious love. "Besides, Lilith would never forgive me."

"And I would never move against my oldest and dearest friends," Lilith said, gazing between me and Hannah.

I glanced to Hannah and she nodded, confirming they were speaking the truth. I tried not to let my relief show. If I'd had to fight the vampires and the Lilim, on top of the other demons, I might actually lose the battle. Probably not, but why risk it?

"I appreciate your honesty and loyalty," I said. "What do you know of their insurrection?"

Lilith took a slow sip of her wine. "We know all the other Archdemons have turned against you. We believe Nemesis is leading them."

"Nemesis?" Hannah asked. "The Archdemon of the imps?"

"Yes, she's always been a jealous one," Lilith said. "Hungry for power. Did you know she's tried to seduce Lucifer many times over the years?"

"And always failed," I snapped. Nemesis had long been a thorn in my side, but I never thought she'd stoop so low as to actually plan a coup. "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

Lilith and Baal exchanged glances, before Lilith turned back to me, lowering her voice as she confessed, "They've threatened to hurt our children if we helped you. Even telling you this much is a big risk. But I can no longer remain silent."

"We refused to join them...but we can't help you either," Baal said.

I tapped my fingers against my wine glass as I glanced between the two of them. I understood their fears, but I also knew what was coming. "They're planning the release the Four Horsemen."

"No," Lilith said, her word more like a gasp.

"That is...unfortunate." Baal had always been a master of understatement.

"I suspect you want Famine to show up about as much as I want Death released," I said to Baal. I was driving the issue home, and we both knew it.

"You're right," he said. "I would prefer not to see either of our parents walk this world. But my hands are tied."

"What if..." Hannah spoke from beside me, her voice quiet, thoughtful.

"Go on." I knew that voice. It was a tone that had helped me out many times in the past.

"What if Baal pretended to join the other Archdemons?" She looked at me as she spoke. "Then he can feed information back to you."

"Like a spy." I rested my hand lightly over Hannah's, pleased with her for speaking up, before locking eyes with Baal. "They'll believe it, because you've always been outspoken about your desire to take my throne."

Baal chewed his food and sipped his wine, and we all did the same, giving him time to think over the idea. After a few moments, he set his glass down and nodded once. "I'll do it. But you will owe me a favor, Lucifer."

"I'm going to regret this, aren't I?" I chuckled, dark and low. I disliked owing favors to anyone, and much preferred when the power balance leaned in my direction. However, this favor would be worth it. "But you have a deal."

HANNAH



“**H**annah, would you care to walk with me?” Lilith asked, as Lucifer and Baal continued the discussion of their plan. It had taken on a life of its own after Lucifer said the word *spy*, and I had a feeling they'd be working out the details for hours.

I rose to my feet. "I'd love that."

Lilith and I set off down the nearest winding path, tiny pieces of white gravel crunching beneath our feet. The garden was a huge oasis of plants and flowers, most of which I recognized at first sight, and I was curious to explore it some more. Besides, I felt much more at home out here among the foliage than anywhere else.

We wandered down various paths for a while before Lilith spoke. "I hope we can be friends again," she said as I stopped to admire a particularly pretty evening primrose. "Like we were in the old days."

She pretended to be distracted by the overhanging, feathery leaves of a weeping willow, but she'd never had a particular love for nature, that much I remembered. Well, nature that didn't involve naked humans, anyway.

I grazed my fingers over the delicate petals, trying to think of a polite reply before I looked at her. "I'm still sorting out my returned memories. You were Adam's first wife, weren't you?"

"I was, yes." She glanced down the path, deeper into the garden that seemingly had no end. "I was forced to marry Adam against my will, back when I was human. But I didn't love him, and I saw the darkness within his heart. I ran away, much like you did."

"You were once human?" I asked.

"Long ago, yes." She grimaced a little at the memory. "And much like you, I was also cursed. I was turned into a succubus for my crime of leaving Adam. The Elder Gods loved him. Probably because he was as awful as they were."

"Hence why they call your kind 'Lilim,'" I said.

"Yes, although please don't think I sired the entire line." She let out a delicate laugh. "They created many others after me. I was simply the first."

I stood from where I was by the flowerbed as I considered her words, which rang true. "I'm slowly remembering these things, but sorting through all of my memories has been difficult."

"In that case, there's something you should probably know about me before you remember it on your own and get the wrong idea," She sounded hesitant as she touched my arm to get my full attention. "I slept with Lucifer. Eons ago. After I met Adam, before Lucifer met you as Eve, when I had first become a succubus and I could barely control my newfound hunger. It meant nothing though. A simple dalliance to help ease my insatiable thirst. Once he met you, he had no interest in anyone else."

It meant nothing. Wasn't that what they all said? But Lilith was speaking the truth. Though I felt a quick pang of jealousy, I couldn't be upset about something that had happened so long ago, before Lucifer had even met me.

She continued before I could answer. "At first, I was jealous of you, and how you'd captured his eye so completely, but I soon came to view you as one of my closest friends. Besides, we both know Lucifer is not the type to share."

"No, definitely not." I cocked my head. "Your daughter told me about how challenging it was to feed a succubus's hunger."

Lilith's face broke into a big smile. Maybe she'd expected an angrier reaction than the one I gave her. "Isn't she lovely? I only recently reconnected with Olivia. I'm so proud of the woman she's become." She ran her finger lightly along a flower petal. "I had to give up Olivia when she was a child. It was for her own safety since she was the only angel-demon hybrid, and such a thing was forbidden back then. It was the hardest thing I've ever done."

"How did you go about reconnecting with her?" I asked.

She smirked and tossed her dark hair. "I made a nuisance of myself. I showed up in her life one day, and then I kept showing up. That's all you have to do."

"Annoy them until they love you back?" I asked with a laugh. "I wonder if that might work on Belial. I know he and Lucifer have had a falling out of some sort."

"It's best if you remember that story on your own, I think." Lilith drew me close to her, linking her arm through mine as she led me down another path. The light from the gazebo glowed gently at the end, and every so often a burst of male laughter drifted in our direction on the breeze. "But even though Belial and Lucifer are estranged, that doesn't mean they can't make things right. Nothing is too late while they're still both alive."

We emerged from the gardens back by the gazebo, but before we returned to our men, she stopped and looked me in the eye. "If you want your son in your life again, you should consider making a bold move."

A bold move... My breath caught in my throat. She was right. I had to find Belial, and make things right with him.

I had to go to New Orleans.

Lucifer shut the door of the guest room with a quiet click as I took in the space. A huge, wooden four-poster bed was hung with gauzy curtains, while a small fire crackled in a fireplace in the corner, with two small chairs flanking it. Every piece of furniture looked like it had been lovingly crafted, and I sensed they all had an impressive history. Pillows and throws were strewn artfully across the bed and chairs, and I wanted to lie down just to experience the comfort.

"You were brilliant tonight." Lucifer loosened his necktie, the noise of the fabric slicing through the room, his fingers swift as he made the masculine movement. "I knew you would have no trouble resuming your role as my queen."

"I'm happy I could help in some way." I sat in one of the chairs by the fireplace and fiddled with the soft throw hanging over the arm. "But there's something I want to talk to you about."

His brows drew low. "What is it?"

"I want us to visit Belial."

Lucifer shook his head. "It's not a good idea right now, with all that's happening with the Archdemons. Once things have calmed down, then we can see him."

"No." I stood, no longer hesitant, my voice firm as I took control of the situation. "I don't want to wait. What if Adam kills me, permanently this time? What if I never get to see my sons again?"

"Adam won't—" he started, but then he pressed his lips together as I narrowed my eyes into a glare.

"We can't know that for sure."

Lucifer moved to the great window overlooking the garden and rested his hands upon the sill as he gazed outside. His back was tense, his muscles tight and straining against his shirt. After some time, he sighed and turned back to me. "Very well. But it would be better if you went alone."

"What happened between you and Belial?" My memories from Eve and my other early lives were the hardest to access and the most faded due to time, unlike more recent lives like Lenore. I remembered Belial, but only in brief flashes and pangs of emotion. Love. Pride. Disappointment. Guilt. Sadness.

Lucifer scowled. "He rebelled against us, as all children do in the end."

Something had happened, something no one wanted to talk about, but it had clearly broken our family in two. I wasn't going to stand for that. "You should come with me."

"It's not a good idea. I won't stop you from going, but you'll have better luck speaking with Belial without me there. Just take Azazel with you. And Morningstar."

I grabbed my brush and began working it through my hair slowly as I considered his words. "Thank you."

He sat on the edge of the bed, folding his shirt sleeves up to reveal his masculine forearms. "For what?"

I set my brush down on the vanity and locked eyes with him. "For respecting my wishes. For treating me like an equal."

He inclined his head slightly. "I'm doing my best."

I stood and unzipped my dress, lowering it to my shoulders. "I know."

"Besides, you know what the best thing is about you traveling alone?" Lucifer's eyes took on a wicked gleam.

"What's that?" I let my dress fall the rest of the way to the floor, revealing a thin slip underneath and nothing else.

"Saying goodbye." He reached for me as I walked toward the bed. Without hesitation, I slipped my hand into his and he tugged, pulling me so I sprawled on top of him.

"Mmm..." He pressed his lips to my neck and pushed one of the thin straps of my slip from my shoulder. "I think this might need to be a very long goodbye indeed."

I relaxed completely under his touch as his mouth burned a trail of heat across my skin. I arched my neck, increasing his access.

"Just promise you'll come back to me," he said. "I won't lose you again." His words seared into me, sinking deep into my soul, before he flipped us, the movement so fast he was above me before I even registered the movement.

"Always." I reached up to touch his face, overcome with emotion. Deep down, he must be afraid I'd leave and never return. I wondered if he'd always had that fear, if every time he watched me be killed by Adam's hand he wondered if I would reborn again.

I curled my fingers into the hair at the back of his head and drew him toward me, lifting to meet his mouth, capturing his lips in a deep kiss. His tongue brushed against mine, and I was greedy for him, opening my mouth and arching my back, pressing my body to his in search of his touch.

He groaned as he explored my mouth, and my hand fisted tighter in his hair as he rocked against me, the bulge in his pants hitting just the right spot. Wave after wave of heat flooded me, and I dug my free hand into his ass as I ground against him, seeking a quick release even though the need to feel him inside me was almost overwhelming.

His hand slid up the side of my body, skimming the slippery fabric separating him from my skin. "I like this very much, but it's got to go."

I popped open a button on his shirt. "You're right. Our clothes are in the way."

He lifted up and removed his shirt, then threw it across the room. His pants vanished too, leaving me with a naked devil looming over me. His eyes burned red as he looked at me through heavy lids, lust evident in his gaze, but also something else flickering in the fiery depths. Love.

He gripped the hem of my slip with a devious smile, but I caught his hand before he could continue.

"Don't rip it!" The man had destroyed way too many of my clothes already. "It's the only one I own."

He slammed my hand down on the bed, pinning me beneath him, his body looming over me as his lips seared my neck like a brand. "When we're back, I'll buy you an entire wardrobe of lingerie just so I can have the pleasure of destroying them every night."

His words sent a ripple of dark anticipation through me. As he pushed the slip up my thighs, the fabric skimmed my skin in a light caress, and a shiver ran through me. He moved down my body to kiss above my knee, then again in the middle of my thigh. Inching my slip upward, he kissed the new skin revealed, until he paused.

"Now, how loud should I make you call my name?" he murmured, as he smoothed his hands across my skin. "Loud enough that everyone in this house knows what I'm doing to you?"

I pressed my lips together as heat gathered in my cheeks. I'm sure the people in this house had heard worse with Lilith here.

"Yes." He coaxed my thighs apart. "Let's make you scream."

He kissed the inside of my thigh, sucking gently on the soft skin there before nuzzling forward. Higher. My hands were back in his hair, and he groaned softly as my fingertips pressed into his scalp. At first, all I was aware of was the warm air of his breath, but he quickly followed that with his equally warm tongue, and I squeezed his hair tighter as he ran it toward my core.

His fingers circled my clit, and I lifted my hips off the bed, trying to angle myself to nudge him closer to where I wanted his touch most. Then he lowered his head, and his tongue flicked out, grazing my clit. I tensed and tried to muffle an unexpected cry with my hand tight over my mouth. He sucked my clit into his mouth, and I gasped out meaningless sounds at the hint of teeth.

"Lucifer!" His name was a breath of air, and I pressed his head closer as he barely nipped at my clit then soothed it with his tongue as one of his fingers explored my entrance.

Then he switched his fingers and his mouth, his tongue dipping inside me as he rolled my clit with a laziness that kept me right on the edge of... something. I searched for it, chasing the elusive sensation of completion, but it was always just a second more away. He thrust his tongue inside me again, and I squeezed my thighs around him, but I still wanted more.

“Lucifer, I need you inside me.” I pushed my straps from my shoulders, exposing my breasts as if to entice him farther up my body.

I thought he might ignore my words, but then he slowly began to move up my body, worshiping each bit of skin he passed with his mouth. He kissed each of my breasts, sucking on my nipples and flicking them with his tongue before he lay above me, his hard cock nudged between my thighs. Then he paused.

Impatiently, I used my newfound angelic strength to roll us both over on the bed, so I was on top of him. I stared down at my fated mate, my inevitability, and wrapped my hands around the base of his cock. “Now I get what I want.”

He put his hands behind his head and grinned up at me. “I’m yours.”

Slowly, I sank onto his cock, relishing every single inch of the stretch he gave me. My body tensed, then relaxed as the feel of him inside me ignited memories of all the times we'd done this before.

I began to move without thinking, rocking on top of Lucifer with his cock buried as deep as it would go. My clit ground against him, as his hands grabbed my hips and urged me on. Yes, this was exactly what I needed – to be in control. To take what I needed from him.

Switching my rhythm, I leaned forward and braced myself on the bed, arms on either side of his head, and kept rocking. This gave me room to pull up, letting him nearly all the way out of me, then falling back down and thrusting my body on his cock as hard as I could.

But it wasn't enough. I arched my back and rode him hard and fast, grinding down against him, while he held onto my hips and let me fuck myself on his cock. I demanded more and more and he gave it to me without hesitation.

He reached up and teased my nipples with his fingers, and I came apart, bucking wildly, yelling my pleasure as the climax shook through me. I had no doubt everyone in the house knew exactly what we were doing, and I didn't care.

As I sat there, panting through the last bit of it, Lucifer grasped my hips and rolled us over in one smooth motion, never letting his dick slip out of me. Connected. As we were meant to be.

Lucifer began to move his hips. “I am yours, Hannah. I will always be yours.”

But his movements were too slow. “More,” I begged.

“I want to savor it,” he ground out.

“There will be many more times.”

“And I will savor each one,” he replied before claiming my mouth, plunging his tongue between my lips, and swallowing my gasps of pleasure as his body set a rhythm that I matched.

Lucifer moved in and out of me, drawing pleasure with every pass of his shaft. He thrust harder, never removing his gaze from mine. His muscles shifted and moved beneath my hands, and he knew my body so well, slowing and quickening, angling himself to press right where I needed him.

“Lucifer,” I whispered. “I am yours.”

Crying out, he pushed deep inside and stayed there as a second orgasm washed over me. I gasped out his name again as my muscles began to tighten, locking my body around him. This one came from deep within, half emotion and half release. I clutched my devil, pulling him close.

Nothing had felt this perfect in so long. I hadn’t felt so whole in years. My heart knew him, knew he was the missing part of my soul. The missing piece that had always kept me awake at night. My other half.

He pressed his lips at the base of my throat and trailed over my neck, while his cock twitched inside, almost like he was ready for another round.

My body continued to pulse and spasm, and I laughed. “Enough.”

“Never.” His tone was joking, but his eyes were serious. “There will never be enough, Hannah. Not for me.”

HANNAH



A car waited for us directly on the runway when Lucifer's private jet landed in New Orleans, and I descended the steps from the plane into the November sunshine and warmth. I paused and turned my face skyward, my angelic nature soaking up the bright light. Angels needed light to survive and to fuel our powers, while demons and Fallen needed darkness. Which was why Azazel emerged from the plane and ducked her head, donned her sunglasses, and grumbled under her breath.

The driver stared straight ahead as we slid into the cream leather seats, and I fished in my purse for the address of the bar where I hoped to find Belial. Kassiel had given it to me earlier, with a warning that Belial might not give me the warmest welcome.

I passed the paper over the driver's shoulder. "Drive straight here, please."

Zel cocked an eyebrow. "We should head to the hotel first."

"No." I bristled, annoyed at being questioned. "We go to the bar first."

Zel held up her hands in surrender, and I turned away from her and stared out of the window. I wasn't really upset with her, just anxious about this trip, especially now that we'd arrived. I tried to ignore my jangling nerves and focus on the New Orleans scenery—old buildings with tons of charm, colorful streetcars gliding down the road, people stopping to dance to music on the sidewalk. Any other day, this would have been incredible. But I was meeting my son, and fuck if it didn't feel like the first time.

I wiped my sweat-slicked palms over the side of my pants. It might have been easier if Zel had been more of a conversationalist, but when I

shot a glance in her direction, she was looking out her own window, her mouth pressed into a tight line. Probably upset with me for overruling her, although that was something she'd have to get used to now. I was no longer clueless human Hannah, after all. I was her boss now.

"Have you been to New Orleans before?" I asked.

She dragged her gaze back to me and looked at me like I was an idiot. "Of course I have."

Okay, so we'd probably need to have a talk about her attitude at some point.

The limo eventually pulled over in front of a row of buildings. I hesitated, my hand on the door handle, like I was waiting for some sort of sign before I got out of the car.

"Take our bags to the hotel, please," I said to the driver. "We'll walk from here."

I got out of the car, and made sure to grab Morningstar and strap it to my back. Not that I expected to need it, but Lucifer had insisted I take it in case an Archdemon sent minions after me. I did feel more confident with it on, as I sucked in a deep breath and stared at the row of buildings on this narrow street. Many of the structures looked jammed together in a row, their second stories all displaying beautiful balconies with wrought-iron filigree designs, some with greenery cascading over the front. I spent a minute admiring the architecture, so different from anything in California or Nevada, but I had to admit to myself that I was only trying to delay.

"Why am I nervous?" I asked, with an awkward laugh. "He's my son."

She gave me a hard look. "Because he's Belial."

That didn't make me feel any better, but I continued forward. The bar we were looking for was situated at the end of the street, in a two-story stone building with blue shutters on all the many tall windows. Big big red doors stood at the corner, and over them was a sign that read Outcast Bar, with a logo of two black wings that reminded me a lot of the painting in Lucifer's penthouse.

"I'll wait out here," Zel said. "Give you some time alone with him. He and I have...issues."

Great. I was on my own, then.

The bar appeared closed from the outside, but the door opened when I tried it. I stepped into the gloomy interior of the bar and looked around, giving my eyes time to adjust as I inhaled the smells of freshly waxed

wood and spilled beer. It was early enough that the place was empty, with no bartender or staff in sight, giving me time to take in the rows of jewel-colored bottles against the enormous mirror and the clean glasses all hanging in their rows, ready for customers come this evening.

"Hello, Mother," a deep voice said. "It's been a long time."

I whipped my head around to see a muscular, broad-shouldered man walking out of a doorway, a wooden crate in his arms, the sleeves of his gray tee rolled up to show off his big, tattooed biceps. He had his father's chiseled jaw and nearly-black hair, and my—Eve's—dark brown eyes and olive skin. Like all our sons, he looked a lot like Lucifer, except Belial had turned the bad boy dial up to max. The kind of man you'd expect to ride a Harley and wouldn't want to be caught alone with in an alley. But he was still my son, and my chest tightened at the sight of him.

"How did you know who I am?" I walked forward slowly as he put the crate behind the bar and grabbed a rag, slinging it over his shoulder.

Belial leaned back against the mirrored bar wall and crossed his arms. "I've seen you in different bodies hundreds of times now. I always know."

He gestured for me to have a seat at the bar—a casual flick of his hand toward the stool in front of him. Shock made my movements sharp as I slid onto the barstool, adjusting slightly to accommodate the sword on my back. I hadn't expected to be recognized. I'd agonized all throughout the plane ride about how to introduce myself to him, and in the end, it didn't even matter.

"You don't seem surprised to see me," I said, as I rested my hands awkwardly on the bar.

He lifted a shoulder, his arms still crossed, showing off his ink. "You always come. I'm just surprised it took this long."

"There were some...complications." I couldn't tear my eyes off my son. So handsome, so strong, and so...distant. Closed off. Even though the longing to hold him in my arms was almost a physical ache, he clearly did not want a hug from me.

Silence stretched between us. I wasn't sure what to say and spent a minute glancing around the bar, noticing that it was well-kept but had an older feel to it. Like something that had been around for a while. "How long have you worked here?"

"I've owned this place for many years. You want a drink?"

"Sure. Anything is fine." I doubted I'd taste it right now anyway.

He grabbed a tumbler and poured scotch from the top shelf, then slid it in front of me. "The last time I saw you was when you were Lenore in the 1800s. I owned a different bar then. You visited me often with Kassiel when he was a kid." He smirked. "Always trying to bring the family together."

Not much had changed, then. I took a long swig of the generous measure of scotch. "Did it work?" I asked, even though I knew the answer.

He poured himself a shot of something clear and downed it, his face surly. "Nope."

This man was definitely one of my children with that attitude, although he probably got it more from Lucifer than me. They got all their bad habits from their father. Or so I told myself.

"What have you been doing all these years?" I asked, trying to get *something* out of him, even though it seemed like he had no interest in talking to me at all.

He spread his arms wide. "Pretty much what you see right now. I own a bar. I keep my head down. I stay out of the supernatural world."

I perked up a little at that bit of information. "Why's that?"

Belial let out a harsh laugh. "Because I'm the exiled prince."

I was about to open my mouth to ask what happened, when the red doors crashed open, the wood splintering at the hinges from the force. I barely had time to duck before a huge man barreled through on black, bat-like wings.

A gargoyle.

"Hannah!" Watch out!" Zel's voice rang across the bar as she followed after the gargoyle.

Shit. Gargoyles were damn hard to kill because their skin turned to stone when they fought. Light-infused blades were one of the only things that could injure them. Good thing I'd brought Morningstar. I whipped the sword off my back and it instantly ignited with blinding white light, as if reacting to the presence of the demons. My wings spread wide, blocking Belial, my protective instincts in overdrive.

But I needn't have worried. Belial jumped onto the bar and shot bright blue fire from his hands, hitting the gargoyles as they poured through the door. Their stone skin cracked, the sounds like thunder echoing around the room. My mouth fell open as I watched him as he wielded hellfire—the only person with that power other than his father.

I kicked myself out of my prideful staring and surged forward, my wings carrying me as I swung Morningstar and put all my recent training with Callan and Zel to good use. Morningstar glowed as it sliced through a gargoyle's shoulder, and around me the chink of Zel's weapons sounded as she fended others away. Hellfire blazed past and the air was filled with the guttural moans of injured and dying gargoyles.

As I swung around and stabbed the blade through a gargoyle's chest, another one grabbed my wings. He yanked hard, making me yell at the sudden, sharp pain, and shadowy tentacles surrounded the gargoyle, dragging him off me and throwing him against the mirrored wall, smashing it and sending liquor bottles flying. I assumed it was Belial or Azazel, but both of them were busy fighting across the room.

Then I realized the shadows came from me.

I stared down at the darkness swirling around me. Impossible. I was an angel, not a Fallen.

A woman with long black hair and black leathery wings stepped into the room, flanked by more of her kind. I recognized her as Bella aka Belphegor, Archdemon of the gargoyles.

"That's enough fighting, children," she purred with a soft French accent. "Time to take a nap."

She raised a hand and Zel closed her eyes and hit the floor, followed by Belial. I raised Morningstar to defend my son and my friend, but Belphegor's eyes landed on me, and I felt the pull of sleep dragging me down. I tried to fight it, rushing toward her, but my knees weakened. Two gargoyles grabbed my arms as heavy exhaustion settled over me, and I clenched my teeth as my eyes closed and I succumbed to the darkness.

LUCIFER



While Hannah took the private jet to see our son, I tried to distract myself with work at my desk in the library. I had a feeling Hannah would return disappointed, but I couldn't stop her from trying to reconnect with Belial. Even if I knew it would never work. Some things couldn't be repaired.

I eventually gave up on getting any work done and perused my library, gazing at the vast collection of books I'd gathered over my long years, along with some paintings and artifacts. One of my favorites was the painting of Eve being tempted by Lucifer, done as a commission for me by Michelangelo back during the Renaissance.

A few books had been piled up on one of the side tables by the armchair Hannah liked to sit in, and I picked them up and began to put them away. When I'd had this hotel built, I'd specifically requested this library be added to the penthouse, knowing how much my mate would love it once she found her way back to me. And she did. It thrilled me every time I found her in here, curled up under a blanket with a book. I'd built palaces for her once in an effort to impress her, but later realized all she truly ever wanted were gardens and libraries.

Samael stepped into the library, his dark brows drawn together. "How was your meeting with Baal and Lilith?"

His tone was sharper than normal, and I raised my eyebrows. "Did someone wake up with his wings in a bind again?" I sat at my desk and folded my hands upon it, feeling the old wood beneath my palms. "The meeting went well. They cannot outright help us because the other

Archdemons have threatened their children, but Baal is going to act as a spy and provide us some information when he can. They've already given me the name of the Archdemon leading the rebellion—Nemesis."

Samael shook his head. "You should've taken me. Or Azazel."

I leveled a hard look at him in return. Samael wasn't actually angry because I hadn't taken him—or, indeed, Azazel—no matter the words he used to protest, but I waited for him to finish.

"You know Baal can't be trusted," he added. "How do we know he's not lying about all of this?"

I linked my fingers behind my head and sat back. "I think we both know the real person you're upset with isn't me, or even Baal. It's Lilith." His eyes blazed again, and I bit back a grin. Some days, Samael made baiting him so easy. It was barely even a game. "After all, she has been living there for a year now. I've never known her to stay with one man for so long."

Samael balled his hands into tight fists, his knuckles straining beneath his olive skin. "I don't care about that. The two of us were done centuries ago. But she turned Asmodeus mortal without even consulting me. My son will age and *die*. He's going to die, Lucifer. And there's nothing I can do to stop it."

The pain in his voice brought back my own grief at losing a child, though I tried hard to keep it buried deep down. I rose to my feet and crossed around the desk to his side, then set my hand upon his shoulder. "I am sorry about that, old friend. It might do you some good to sit down with Lilith and talk about it. She's just as upset as you are. Or better yet, visit with Asmodeus and his mate. Then perhaps you'll understand why he made his choice."

Samael huffed. "As if I have time for that with the impending apocalypse upon us."

"If it even happens," I said. "Has there been any sign of Adam, or any movement from the Archdemons?"

"Not yet, but our people are hunting for him. I've also sent Fallen soldiers to guard Pestilence's tomb."

"Good." Pestilence would have to be released first, before any of the others could be awakened. One of our safety precautions from when we sealed the Horsemen away. The destruction that even one of them could unleash upon the world was unfathomable—all four of them would mean

the end of everything. It's why I let Hannah visit Belial, even though I knew it wouldn't end well. And why Samael shouldn't wait either. "You know, if things go poorly, you might regret not taking the time to connect with your family."

Samael scowled and crossed his arms. "I doubt Lilith would want to see me anyway."

I raised an eyebrow as I perched on the edge of my desk. "I wouldn't be so sure about that."

A knock sounded on the library door and I called for the person to enter. A beautiful Fallen named Einial walked inside and bowed low before us, her long blond hair curling at the ends over her shoulders. "My lord," she murmured.

"Ah, good," Samael said. "Lucifer, I believe you know Einial. I've chosen her for my new assistant."

I nodded. "A fine choice."

Einial was a few hundred years old and had been born a Fallen, unlike Samael and Azazel, who'd left Heaven with me long ago. She'd been one of Samael's spies for centuries, and was married to a sultry woman named Anig, an ancient vampire who didn't generally bother with the rest of demon politics.

She handed Samael a manila envelope. "The report you ordered on the comings and goings at Pestilence's location."

"Excellent." He opened the folder, while my phone dinged with an incoming message.

I glanced at the screen. Spam. Dammit—why was the king of the underworld still getting spam? But as I flicked to delete the message, I glanced at the time.

"Why hasn't Hannah checked in yet? She should have arrived hours ago." Worry seeped into my chest, and I dialed her immediately. She didn't answer. I tried Azazel next. Nothing.

Samael grabbed his phone after I'd tried Azazel a second time. "I'll call the pilot."

Two minutes later, he set the phone down on the table and shook his head, his face creased with concern. "He hasn't seen them, and they haven't checked into the hotel either."

Something was wrong. The Archdemons must have gone after her. I knew it in my gut. But why now? Why not when she'd gone to visit Jophiel

or Brandy?

Belial.

Of course.

I turned my gaze on Samael. "Fucking hell. They're after Belial. And Hannah led them right to him."

"I'll arrange transportation for us to head to New Orleans immediately," Samael said.

"Wait. Why do they want Belial?" Einial asked, her brow furrowed.

I grabbed my suit jacket, already on my way out the door. "Because he's the only one who can release Pestilence."

HANNAH



My head slammed against something, and a dull ache radiated through my skull. I tried to open my eyes, but they were slow to move, almost like they were stuck shut or pinned down. My throat ached, and I swallowed against the dryness of it, groaning a little as I did. I was in constant motion, my cheek scraping across a dusty, grit-covered surface as my body swayed. I moaned softly.

“Mother?”

At the sound of Belial’s voice, I tried to open my eyes again, finally peering through two narrow slits into a dim, metal-walled room. Except, no. That wasn’t right. The entire room was moving, and the low rumble of an engine vibrated through my body.

“Hot,” I murmured. Shit, it was so dry and hot here. Like someone had left me baking in an oven. This was not New Orleans weather. Were we back in Nevada?

“Mm.” Belial ground out his agreement.

Recollection came back to me. The bar. The gargoyles. Belphegor.

“Zel?” I could only manage one-word questions, and my voice was hoarse. I tried to look around, but my eyeballs ached. I couldn’t see her.

“Not here.”

Fuck. Had they taken her somewhere else? What if she was dead?

I grimaced against the fear and the aches in my body as I struggled to sit up. I couldn’t do anything about Zel now. I had to focus on saving myself and my son. What I really needed was a drink, something to wet my throat. Hair slicked to my forehead, and tendrils of it were stuck with

sweat to the back of my neck. The floor beneath me jostled again, and I groaned as my head bumped against the metal wall.

"We're traveling through the desert," Belial said. "Some sort of truck."

"Nevada?" I asked.

"Don't think so."

My arms were heavy, and I glanced down at the strange weight. A silver cuff hung around each wrist, like an old-fashioned manacle, only I wasn't chained to anything or otherwise bound. Each cuff was perfectly seamless except for a spot where chains could be added, with no obvious way to open it.

"Like our new accessories?" Belial asked, his tone laced with irritation.

"What are they?" They didn't look so bad. I shook one wrist experimentally.

Belial rolled his head against the corrugated inside of the moving truck. "They null our powers."

I paused. "No powers?"

"He shook his head. "And they're impossible to get off. I've tried."

"Fuck." There wasn't really another word for it, and my throat still hurt. But at least in this sitting position, some sort of breeze fanned across me. It was a warm one, but moving air was better than being suffocated in heat. I tried to reach for my wings, or any of my angelic powers, but it was like being human again. There was just nothing there.

I studied my son as he leaned back against the metal wall. Sweat creased his brow and his dark hair hung limp. A ragged tear ran up the side of his gray t-shirt. His eyes were exhausted but wary and alert. If he'd gotten injured, he'd already healed it.

It was my fault he was in this mess at all. For years he'd lived a quiet life running his bar, and I'd ruined all that.

"I'm sorry," I said. "For getting you caught up in this."

He gave me a wry smile. "I'm not mad at you. Though this kind of shit is precisely the reason I've stayed out of the supernatural world the last few centuries."

I nodded. There weren't any more words to express my regret.

We sat in silence for a while, the truck speed seeming to be steady, the road more or less smooth, the temperature constant. When things showed

no sign of changing, I decided I might as well continue my plan of reconnecting with my son. We might not have much time left, after all.

"Tell me what happened with your father." I had a general idea, but those memories weren't making themselves super clear yet. I needed to know what I was up against before I could mend the rift between our family.

Belial lifted his eyebrows as if surprised by my words. "There's not much to tell."

I lifted my shoulders in a small shrug. "Then it won't take long to fill me in. It's not like we've got anything else to do but kill time back here."

He tilted his head back and stared off into space, his face hard. I thought he was going to ignore my request, when he finally said, "After you died as Persephone, Damien decided to stay in Faerie."

Damien. My middle son. Half-fae. Half-Fallen. Once I got out of this mess, I would find him next. "Why?"

Belial spread his hands. "What can I say? We blamed Father for your death. *All* your deaths. For the curse itself. But when you died that time, it hit us hard. As Persephone you lived a long time, and we had a..." He dropped his voice, looking away. "We had a real family for a while."

My chest tightened at his words. "I'm sorry. This has been so hard on you boys."

He shot me an exasperated look. "I'm thousands of years old. Hardly a boy."

I'll admit, it was strange calling this man my son, when he was centuries older than my current body. But at the same time, I had memories stretching back to when he was born. I vaguely remembered holding him in my arms as a baby. Damn, he'd been a fighter even then. Fighting sleep. Refusing to do anything we asked. Being way too smart and stubborn for his own good. I closed my eyes as memories of a brown-eyed, dark-haired toddler glaring up at me in defiance made me smile.

I turned that smile on Belial. "Ask any mother. You'll always be boys to me. *My* boys."

He shook his head, his mouth set in a tight line, but he knew better than to respond.

I gestured for him to keep talking. "What happened after Damien moved to Faerie?"

"The short version?" Belial asked, with a dark smirk. "I let my ego get too big and thought I could take Father down." He let out a harsh laugh. "I led an uprising against him to take the throne of Hell. As the oldest of the Nephilim, I had them on my side, along with some Fallen and demons too. But I failed, and I was cast out of Hell. I've been laying low on Earth ever since."

I nodded slowly as I listened. "Nephilim?"

"People like me. Half human. Half angel or Fallen."

"Right." I struggled through my memories of the time, but they were so vague. "Where was I during all this?"

"You hadn't been reborn yet."

That would explain why I had no memories of that battle. I did vaguely remember arguing with Lucifer in Hell over Belial's exile, but it had been years after the fact. I'd fought for Lucifer to pardon Belial, but he'd refused. He'd said too many lives had been lost in the uprising, and an example had to be made. He couldn't simply let our son try to overthrow him and claim the throne of Hell without some sort of punishment. Besides, if it had been anyone other than our son, the punishment would have been death. Exile was Lucifer being lenient. I'd argued that Belial had been punished enough, but Lucifer wouldn't budge unless Belial made some sort of formal apology or reparations, which naturally Belial refused to do. And now here I was, centuries later, still trying to fix this mess.

Stupid, stubborn men. I loved them, but sometimes they were useless without a woman making sure shit actually got done.

There was something else too. Something I'd said in that argument with Lucifer about how Belial had lost something... No. Someone.

"You lost someone you loved in the uprising, didn't you?" I asked.

"Yes." He growled and turned his head away. "Tatra. One of Father's many casualties. Something I've never forgiven him for."

"I'm sorry." I felt for him, I truly did, and I knew how hard it would be to lose the person I loved. But I also understood Lucifer's position. Just like now, Lucifer had been forced to defend his throne. I'd been miserable about losing Belial, but I'd stood by Lucifer's punishment because our son had to be held accountable for his actions.

I blew out a soft sigh. "That was a very long time ago. Don't you think it's time to see if things could be worked out between you and your father?"

“No,” he said flatly, and there was no room for argument in his tone.

I pressed my lips together to prevent myself from arguing further. I sensed if I wanted to bring my family back together, I needed to tread carefully to avoid scaring Belial off completely. Besides, we needed to get out of this situation first. I had no doubt Lucifer was already looking for us, but I wasn't going to sit around and wait for rescue. If there was a way for us to escape, we'd take it.

The truck turned and bounced a couple of times before the thin squeal of brakes being applied sliced through the air in the box-container we were in. Belial scooted in front of me to face the back door, his jeans scraping in the grit as he moved. I couldn't see his face, but I grasped his upper arm loosely as we sat in silence, the anticipation building as we waited.

After several long minutes, there was a grinding noise of bolts being released and the door burst open. I got a quick view of a dark sky hung with stars before two huge gargoyles with stone skin jumped into the container and grabbed Belial. My son shouted and fought as he was ripped from my hold. They dragged him outside and flung him unceremoniously to the ground, then grabbed me and did the same before I could even react.

We were in the middle of the desert, the moon lighting the vast, open space. Nothing but sand in every direction, other than our convoy of trucks. The land was eerie in its paleness, and a chill rippled over my skin. The sun had gone, and the air grew colder by the second now that we weren't insulated inside the moving truck. As an angel, the cold bothered me more than it had before. If I'd had my powers, I could have used light to warm myself, but the cuffs prevented that. At least Belial would be fine—as half Fallen, he would barely feel the cold, just like the other demons here.

I quickly scanned the area. There were at least thirty people around us, and most looked like fighters. I spotted Belphegor barking orders, and beside her was a gorgeous woman with flame-red hair. Nemesis. Archdemon of the imps...and the one behind the plot against Lucifer. According to Belial and Lilith, anyway.

Then Gadreel—Adam—emerged from another truck, and cold fear slid down my spine, mixed with molten rage. I watched him approach without shrinking back, hatred coiling tightly inside me like a snake waiting for its moment. I was going to kill that asshole for everything he'd done to me

and my family over the years. I burned with the desire to take him down, but when I reached for my powers, I felt nothing.

Damn. I couldn't do anything with a swarm of armed gargoyles surrounding me and my son, keeping us in the dirt, forcing us to kneel. Adam had all of his strength and powers as a Fallen, and Belial and I were in magic-blocking cuffs. Plus, I still didn't know where Zel was.

"Hello, Eve," Adam said, as he towered over me. In this life as Gadreel he had sandy blond hair and blue eyes, with a handsome, boy-next-door face that concealed the monster within. "I'm so glad we're together again."

I glared up at him, even though I was terrified. For myself. For my son. "There's no 'together.' You kidnapped me. What do you want?"

Adam's grin grew wider. "For once it's not you I want, but your son. Although I'll gladly have you too."

I glanced at Belial, truly afraid now. What did they want with him?

Before I could ask, some of the gargoyles shackled my ankles with more of those cuffs, and then attached some silver chains to my ankles and my wrists. They did the same to Belial at my side, and then the chains were attached to the truck. I tried fighting against them, using my angelic strength, but the metal was magic and resisted all our efforts. Made by the fae, I remembered vaguely.

"What are you doing?" I asked the question without expectation of reply, but Adam met my gaze, his eyes amused.

He gestured at some of the soldiers, who were pitching tents behind him. "Setting up camp for the night. We have another long day ahead of us tomorrow."

I glanced behind us at the truck. I'd almost have been more comfortable sleeping in the box, locked in, away from the man who lived to kill me. If only I had Morningstar, but I hadn't seen any sign of it since the battle.

"Did you kill Zel?" I kept my words hard and emotionless, even though they felt like they were ripped out of my chest.

"No, of course not," Adam said, and the flicker of emotion in his voice surprised me. "Azazel and I were friends for a long time. We fought side by side, had each other's backs..." He straightened and grinned at me in the darkness. "She's decided to join us in our fight against Lucifer."

"What?" I shook my head. "She would never betray Lucifer. Or me."

"See for yourself." He grabbed my arm and yanked me to a standing position, so I could see over the front of the truck. On the other side of it stood Zel, her dark hair tied back, her daggers strapped to her side. She spoke with a green-haired man with pointed ears—a fae—who looked vaguely familiar, though I couldn't place him. When she saw me looking at her, she scowled and walked away.

Adam laughed as he threw me back in the dirt. "You don't know the depth of loyalty and camaraderie between us. Or her secret hatred of Lucifer. I knew she'd be easy to turn."

My heart pounded with the knowledge Zel was still alive, but I couldn't believe she would turn against us. She'd always been loyal. *Always*.

Belial turned around to scan the horizon. "Are we where I think we are?"

Adam looked pleased with Belial for noticing. "Yes, we'll arrive tomorrow. Lucifer's minions are already there, but it shouldn't be a problem." He left us in the sand and disappeared inside one of the larger tents. Belphegor joined him a few seconds later.

"Where are we?" I asked, turning to my son for answers.

Belial adjusted his position and rested his hands on his knees. "We're in the middle of Palestine. Near the Tower of Jericho." He gave me a level look. "Where Pestilence is sealed."

Fear spiked in my heart. Lucifer was right. Adam and the Archdemons were planning on releasing the Four Horsemen, even knowing it could set off the apocalypse. Maybe that's what they wanted. "Why do they need us here? Or rather, you?"

"They need my blood to open the tomb where Pestilence is currently sealed."

"Your blood?" My brow furrowed as I ran through my murky memories of Eve's past. "Lucifer said the Horsemen were sealed away by him, Archangel Michael, the fae king Oberon, and me."

"Yes, you—as Eve." Belial blew out a long breath as he tried to get comfortable on the hard ground. "Each Horseman is hidden in a different realm, with Pestilence here on Earth, War in Heaven, Famine in Faerie, and Death in Hell. To unlock them, the Archdemons need someone who meets two criteria." He ticked them off on his fingers. "First, they have to be descended from one of the people who sealed the tomb. And second, they have to have been born in the realm the Horsemen was sealed in."

"Sounds complicated," I muttered.

"Complicated on purpose," Belial said. "You don't want any random person to be able to release the Four Horsemen."

"Good point."

"So to unlock Pestilence, they need a human born on Earth, with the blood of one of the original four." Belial spread his tattooed arms wide. "Since you're no longer Eve, that leaves me."

I ran through my memories—yes, Damien had been born in Faerie, and Kassiel in Hell, but Belial I'd had on Earth. I wasn't sure about how many children Michael and Oberon had, but they'd likely been born in Heaven or Faerie, not here.

And I'd led Adam and the Archdemons right to my son.

Fury and fear spiked up my throat, and my hands shook as I glared at the tent where Adam and Belphegor had disappeared inside. I had to stop them—from releasing Pestilence, and from using Belial's blood to do it.

Adam had hurt me far too many times. There was no way I'd let him hurt my son.

HANNAH



After an uncomfortable night where Adam did little more than throw a blanket over me—and only then so I didn't die prematurely in the cold night air—I'd woken up with stiff muscles and was already beginning to overheat in the unrelenting desert sun. Our captors gave us some granola bars and water, let us relieve ourselves, and then threw us back into the truck without ceremony. Belial tried to fight back against them, but Belphegor used her sleep powers to knock him out, and I decided to save my energy. Resolve burned low in my gut as they slammed the door shut, locking us inside.

The relentless forward motion of the truck and the low grumble of the engine, combined with the warmth of the day, almost rocked me gently to sleep. I spent the morning exhausted and dozing, curled up next to my son. Needless to say, this was not the reunion I'd been hoping for.

We awoke when they threw us some moist sandwiches, which we greedily chomped down. They were terrible, but we needed our strength.

"When we stop again, we need to try to escape," I said to Belial once the truck started moving again.

His laugh was harsh. "Sure. With no weapons and no powers. Against dozens of supernatural soldiers and two Archdemons."

"We have to do something." I sighed and leaned back, but couldn't get comfortable. "We can't let them awaken Pestilence."

Belial rubbed his chin, his dark stubble growing more pronounced while in captivity. "All right. If we find a moment when they're distracted, we'll take it."

"Maybe Zel will help us," I muttered. She couldn't have betrayed us. I refused to believe it.

"Azazel?" Belial barked out a laugh. "No way. She'd never lift a finger to help me."

Hours passed before the tone of the engine changed pitch and we rumbled to a stop. I drew away from Belial, instantly alert. Footsteps scuffed around the side of the truck and metal worked against metal again as the door at the back was unbolted. I watched for a chink of light appearing as it opened, but when it did I discovered it was already night, the vast black sky above us bright with stars.

Adam smirked as the soldiers dragged me from the back of the truck, but I looked beyond him, my chest squeezing at the sight of a strange, conical ruin, the stone rugged and crumbling. A wave of something like *déjà vu* came over me as I stared at the Tower of Jericho, and then I remembered it as it had once been—a beautiful structure of mixed stones with a massive staircase, envied for its height and for the advances it represented. Now it was mere ruins. Humans couldn't keep anything nice.

Nemesis approached from one of the other trucks, her ruby-red lips curved into a malevolent smile as she flipped flame-colored hair over her shoulder. As she came closer, I took in her curves and skin-tight clothing. She hadn't changed much over the years—wearing her allure like a favorite outfit. She'd always been jealous of me, I remembered. She hated me for becoming Lucifer's queen instead of her.

She and Belphegor conferred quietly, while I watched Zel, who stood in the background with her hands on her hips, staring off into the distance. I felt sick at the thought that she'd betrayed us, and wished I could read her aura to see the truth. Damn these cuffs.

A gargoyle guard nudged me forward, and I stumbled in surprise as our entire group began to move. As we approached the Tower, I saw people patrolling around it and on top of it. A dark shape flew overhead, blocking out the starlight, and I thought at first it was a raven, before realizing it was a black-winged Fallen. Did they not see us approaching?

Nemesis stood in the center of our group, her arms spread, and I realized she was using her powers of illusion to keep us hidden. Belphegor and some of her gargoyles led the charge, and I could only watch in horror as they approached the Fallen guarding the Tower.

With Nemesis's powers cloaking her, Belphegor walked up to Lucifer's guards, so close they should have been able to smell her, and waved her hand, putting them to sleep. She seemed to delight in their obliviousness, as they collapsed in the cold desert sand with a thump. I started to scream, to warn them, but a hand was clamped over my mouth. I struggled but couldn't do anything about the attack, and the cuffs at my wrists were a constant reminder of my powerlessness. I turned my head toward Zel, pleading at her with my eyes, but she ignored me and stared ahead, her lips pressed into a tight line. How could she stand there and do nothing?

The soldiers, who I assumed were all imps and gargoyles, rushed forward and began killing Lucifer's guards with ease as they slept. This wasn't a battle. This was murder.

Belial suddenly bucked his captors, spinning around and kicking them, while the main force was distracted with the Fallen. I began fighting off the two gargoyles holding me too, but just when I'd broken free, I heard Adam's horrible laugh. I turned and saw Belial face down in the dirt, with a gargoyle with stone skin kneeling on his back, and Adam's sword at his throat. I bowed my head in defeat and let the gargoyles grab me again.

Adam smirked at me, delighting in my misery as he always had. "You always were too soft."

I pictured killing him in varying horrible ways for all he'd done. But he was wrong—I was anything but soft. "Kindness and empathy don't make me soft. They give me the will to fight for what's right."

Adam rolled his eyes and sheathed his sword, then turned away as Belphegor approached. "Is everyone dead, Bella?"

"Yes. Philomelus has started the excavation now," she said. "It shouldn't be long."

Wait. I knew that name. I searched my memories and remembered the green-haired man I'd seen with Zel last night—that was Philomelus. A fae of the Autumn Court who I'd known during my time as Persephone. He'd had a twin brother, Plutus...who'd turned out to be the reincarnation of Adam. The two of them must still have a strong bond, if Philomelus was working with Adam now.

"Good." Adam lowered his head and kissed Belphegor, and the kiss soon turned into a full-blown make-out session, complete with roaming hands and way more tongue than anyone outside their relationship ever needed to see. "Let's go watch my brother work."

They held hands as they walked toward the crumbling tower, and many of the soldiers trailed behind them. Belial and I were made to sit by the trucks in the dirt. I asked for some water, and was completely ignored. I was freezing in the cold night air, but no one cared. All I could hear was a low rumbling sound by the tower.

Then the guard next to me suddenly dropped dead, his neck sliced open. Azazel spun and kicked and slashed with her light-infused dagger, taking out the other guards around us with ease. It happened so fast I barely had time to blink.

"Zel!" I exhaled in relief. "I knew you'd never betray us."

"Of course not. I had to trick that bastard so I could keep an eye on you." She tossed her dark hair as she sheathed her blade. "Can you believe Adam thought I'd join him just because we were friends when he was Gadreel?"

Belial got to his feet and eyed her warily. "Yet you just stood there and watched while they slaughtered your Fallen allies."

Zel's face flashed with anger. "My job is to protect Hannah. Have no doubt, their deaths will be avenged."

"Can you get these off?" I asked, holding out my cuffs. With them on, we couldn't use our wings, which made escape a lot trickier.

"I don't have the key. Adam's got it locked down tight." Zel searched the guards around us and held up some car keys. She tossed them to me. "Get in the truck and go. I'll protect you from the air."

"I'm not leaving you!" I ran for the nearest truck, the keys clutched tightly in my sweaty hands.

Zel's black wings spread behind her with a snap. "They'll come at us from the air. Someone has to hold them back."

She lifted off before I could argue, and Belial grabbed my arm and hauled me the final steps toward the truck. He'd grabbed a sword along the way. I should have thought of that. I got in on the driver's side, and tried the keys with trembling hands as Belial slid in beside me. The engine started up and I slammed my foot on the gas.

The truck peeled off, sending dirt flying in every direction as I headed for the road up ahead. Belial leaned out the window, looking back toward the tower, his stolen sword ready in his hand. I couldn't see Zel, but I assumed she flew over us with her daggers ready. My heart pounded in my chest as I maneuvered the huge steering wheel, knowing this was our one

chance to escape, and it wasn't a very good one. There was nothing around us for miles except dirt and sand and stars. But we had to try.

The truck lurched onto the road, and I nearly let out a whoop of relief, until I glanced in the rearview mirror and saw it was filled with dark-winged figures gaining speed faster than should be possible, like something in a horror movie.

Belial saw it too, and he grabbed hold of the window and hauled himself up and out of it, then climbed onto the roof. My mouth fell open as I watched him, feeling a touch of pride even amid the danger. I so desperately wanted to go with him and protect him, but I had to keep us moving too.

The gargoyles reached us, and I heard the clang of swords striking above me, and the whoosh of air from powerful wings. A female gargoyle with blond hair tried to climb into the window next to me, and I slapped at her face, unable to do much else while driving. With her stone skin, it didn't do much, but then Zel yanked her off, slicing the gargoyle's throat with a glowing white dagger.

Suddenly the truck swerved and stopped, the tires squealing as they tried to keep going forward, but it was like something held us in place. I glanced out the side window and saw tentacles of darkness had grabbed the wheels, coming from Adam's hands. I kept my foot on the gas and yelled in frustration, as the gargoyles surrounded our truck.

Then Zel hit the window in front of me, cracking it instantly, and I screamed. She rolled off and fell to the ground, and I slammed my breaks. Where was my son? Was he all right?

Belphegor landed in front of my truck on bat-like taloned black wings. Adam set down beside her, holding Belial, who seemed to be passed out but otherwise unharmed. I took some small comfort in the fact that they wouldn't kill Belial, not yet anyway. They needed him.

Zel wasn't so lucky. As the gargoyles threw open the truck and hauled me out, they tossed me to the ground beside her. I couldn't tell if she was breathing or not, but she had a wound on her shoulder that was bleeding pretty badly.

"Nice try," Adam said, as he tossed my unconscious son down. "But there's no escape for any of you."

The last thing I saw was his horrid face before the world went black.

HANNAH



“**T**he tomb isn’t there.”

Nemesis's voice roused me from sleep, and I cracked open my eyes. I was back in the dirt near the tomb, surrounded by more guards, with chains attached to my cuffs again. Night had fallen, and my skin prickled against the cold air. Belial sat beside me, already awake and alert, but wearing enough chains that he could barely move. Zel was still passed out beside him. Not dead, thankfully, but still bleeding, even with the rapid healing of an immortal.

I sat up a bit, noticing Nemesis standing a short distance away with Adam, Belphegor, and Philomelus. My one comfort was that they all looked pissed.

“What do you mean, it's not there?” Adam snapped, before they all stomped back in the direction of the tomb.

“Welcome back,” Belial said to me in a low voice.

“I wonder what they mean,” I whispered. “How could the tomb be gone?”

He shrugged, seemingly indifferent to our predicament. Or maybe he was just as exhausted and defeated as I was in this moment. Our escape attempt had failed, and we wouldn't get another shot. Things seemed pretty fucking bleak for us, except for the fact that they couldn't find Pestilence's tomb. That might buy us a few hours. It would have to be enough.

I tried to offer Belial some hope. “Lucifer will come.”

He smirked. “Is that supposed to make me feel better?”

"We'll get through this. I promise." I leaned close to my son and, even though I knew he'd probably pull away, I put my arms around him. The words were spoken partly to reassure myself, and I expected him to make a snarky comment in response.

To my surprise, Belial let me hold him. He was huge, so much larger than I was that it felt like I was hugging a tree, but I breathed in deep, committing this moment to memory. If I died tonight, at least I'd have these few seconds where we'd reconnected.

Adam and the others returned, attracting my attention as they barked out orders to their soldiers. Belial and I were yanked to our feet, then dragged forward and shoved back down to the ground in front of the group.

Nemesis leaned down in front of me, so close I could feel her hot breath against my cheeks. "Where's the tomb?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Nemesis slapped me hard, making my ears ring, the impact so fast and shocking all I could do was take it. "I *said*, where is the tomb?"

Belial struggled against the men holding him and yelled, "Don't fucking touch her!"

Adam pulled Nemesis back. "Don't hurt my prize. Only I'm allowed to do that."

His *prize*? If he came any closer I would vomit all over his shoes.

As sharp pain blossomed across my face, I actually laughed. "I really have no idea. My memories are a jumbled mess."

"Maybe the son knows something," Belphegor said, stepping toward Belial with a knife in her hand.

"If you think that, you're bigger fools than I thought," my son said with a bitter laugh of his own. "Lucifer kicked me out of Hell centuries ago. I don't know anything."

"No, he doesn't," Adam confirmed. "But Eve does. I can get her to talk."

Adam looked at Belial for a moment, and then he slammed his fist into my son's stomach. I felt his grunt of pain in my own gut, and I clutched my chest as he bent over from it. Then Adam turned to me with pure evil in his eyes. "I won't kill him. You know that. But I'll make him hurt so bad he'll pray for death. Unless you tell me where the tomb is."

"I really don't know!" I yanked at my chains, desperate to get to my son. "I'm not lying. I don't remember anything, I swear it."

"Then you better remember fast." Adam grabbed Belphegor's knife and sliced it across Belial's upper arms. Two quick slashes that made him bleed, though his face betrayed nothing.

"No!" I yelled, as blood spilled across my son's tattoos.

"Don't tell them anything, Mother," Belial said through gritted teeth.

Adam sliced Belial's thighs next, through his dirty, ripped jeans, and hot tears fell from my eyes. I yelled at them to stop, struggling and fighting until my arms and legs ached, and Adam paused and looked at me.

"Stop," I cried. "I'll try to remember! Just let me think." I sifted through memories, images coming and going from my head as I pulled them forward and rejected them. I vaguely remembered being at the tower as Eve and spilling my blood onto the tomb, but that didn't explain what had happened to it after that.

"This is taking too long," Nemesis said. "Cut him again."

Adam slashed the dagger across Belial's back next, tearing into his already ripped shirt. Where his wings would be, if he could pull them out.

"Wait, stop!" Closing my eyes, I searched frantically, trying to sort anything that had to do with the tomb. "I'm trying!"

Belial cried out, his hoarse scream echoing off the ruins, and I jerked my eyes open to see blood pouring from his back.

"Wait!" I cried. "I've got something. Stop hurting him." My head began to hurt from the effort of forcing all the memories to comply. "Lucifer..."

"Lucifer *what*?" Belphegor asked.

The images flashed behind my eyes almost like I was watching an old, faded movie with some scenes missing. "He moved it. After Belial's uprising. He said he was doing it to be cautious." I slumped in relief, glad I'd been able to remember something so they'd stop hurting Belial.

But Nemesis surged forward, and her manicured nails lengthened, transforming into claws. She slashed at Belial's chest, and he gave another cry of pain. "Where?" she asked, her tone calm—as if she hadn't just spilled my son's blood into the desert sand.

"I don't know!" I cried. I closed my eyes again as I tried to cover the rapidity of my heartbeat, the franticness of my thoughts, and seem as calm as she did. I couldn't fall apart in front of them. Not if I wanted to protect

Belial. And I needed to block out as many other senses as I could so I could concentrate.

I clutched my head, trying to remember. "I was human," I whispered. "On a ship. With Lucifer." I focused and concentrated as hard as I could, willing to do anything to keep them from hurting Belial. It was an older ship, with big masts and sails, the wood creaking as we sailed across stormy seas. Lucifer wore a billowy white shirt and trousers stuffed into large black boots. He turned and pointed across the waves.

Belial screamed again, his loudest yet. I couldn't open my eyes. I had to keep going. I sorted through the foggy memories. The ship docked, and the massive tomb was hauled off with ropes into a carriage. We continued through hard rain in the dead of night to a ring of stones in the grass.

"Stonehenge!" I opened my eyes. "It's at Stonehenge!"

Adam grinned and stepped close to touch my face, almost tenderly, but I jerked my head away. "I knew you would remember."

"Get ready to move immediately," Nemesis said to the nearest guard.

Oh fuck, what had I done? I'd led them right to Pestilence's location.

I turned to Belial, who watched me with inscrutable eyes, probably disappointed with me for revealing the location. I started to crawl toward him, horrified at the sight of his blood, wanting nothing more than to hold him tight. "I'm sorry," I said to him. "I had to do it."

But then Adam turned to Belial and offered him his hand. I paused, staring open-mouthed, as Belial took it and rose to his feet. Adam removed the cuffs around his wrists, and my son let out a relieved sigh, rubbing the skin there. Then a gargoyle handed Belial a small towel to wipe up the blood. His cuts were already healing, now that the cuffs were off, and I realized they weren't very deep.

"Thank you, Mother," Belial said, as he cleaned himself up quickly, then tossed the bloody rag to one of the nearby men.

"What..." I glanced between Belial and the others, who'd begun packing up and loading things into the trucks. Belial now moved freely between them, as if he was one of them.

"Prepare the jet," Belial ordered. "We're going to England."

"Belial, what's happening?" I asked, reaching for him. I didn't want to believe what I was seeing—my own son betraying me. "Belial!"

His eyes landed on me again, and they were hard. He looked at me like a stranger. No—an enemy.

"Knock her out."

"No!" I screamed as he walked away, my heart breaking even worse than when Lucifer had killed me.

Belphegor moved in front of me, and it all went dark.

LUCIFER



I stepped inside Belial's bar for the first time. I'd visited many times before, but I'd always watched from a distance, telling myself this would be when I finally stepped inside and spoke with my son. Now I feared it might be too late.

The place was a mess. Broken windows. Splintered chairs. Cracked tables. The mirrored wall behind the bar had been shattered, with smashed liquor bottles strewn about, making the room reek of alcohol. I picked up one of the menus scattered on the floor and stared at the Outcast Bar logo. Two tiny dots of blood marred the black wings stamped across the top. Was it Hannah's blood? Belial's? One of their attackers?

I dropped the menu and scanned the dark room, lit only by a bit of magic from my angelic friends. Clearly a fight had taken place here, but the victors had done a good job of cleaning up the evidence. If any had been defeated, their bodies had already been removed. Only these tiny drops of blood remained.

Good thing I had someone who could help with that. When we'd departed from Las Vegas, I'd brought Samael, along with Kassiel, Olivia, and her other men. Most of them were outside, combing the area for any clues, but Bastien was the one I turned to now. As the son of an Archangel, he had an extra power that I needed—the power to read objects and see the past through them.

Bastien stepped up to the bar and rested his hands upon the smooth wood, then closed his eyes. When he opened them, he turned toward me. "Gargoyles."

"I knew it," Samael muttered.

"What happened to Hannah?" I asked.

"Belphegor put her to sleep and she was taken away," Bastien said. "Along with Azazel."

I swore under my breath. This wasn't the first time Belphegor and her people had attacked Hannah. When I saw the Archdemon again, I was going to rip her apart, limb by limb. "And Belial?"

Bastien's dark brows furrowed. "He initially seemed to be knocked out by Belphegor—but once Hannah was asleep he stood up and brushed himself off. He walked out of the bar with Belphegor."

"No." The word slipped out of my mouth, even as the obviousness of it hit me like a punch in the gut. Belial was working with the Archdemons. Of course he was. He'd tried to overthrow me once before, and it hadn't worked, and now he was part of the plot to do it again. I should've known he would try again. What a fool I'd been to think perhaps we'd been ready to let the old grievances die, to hope that Hannah might finally be able to mend what had been so thoroughly broken.

"Any sign of where they went?" Samael asked. "Was Adam with them?"

"No," Bastien said. "To both your questions."

I found a half-empty bottle of bourbon and picked it up, downing the last of it, then tossed it against the wall, hard. As it smashed, the sound of glass breaking echoed through the bar. Hellfire danced across my fingers as I gazed across the room. I wanted to burn this entire place down. To make Belial feel a hint of the betrayal I felt now.

Samael rested a hand on my shoulder. "We'll find them. At least we can take comfort in the fact that Belial won't hurt Hannah."

Not physically, no. But emotionally? Belial could hurt her worse than anyone had done before. I knew, because he'd done it to me. I'd do anything to spare Hannah that kind of pain, especially when she'd suffered so much already.

From outside came the sound of a shout and a snarl, and then I caught sight of Callan's brawny frame throwing a large wolf through the already-broken window of the bar. The wolf hit the wall and crashed to the floor, and everyone around me drew weapons and charged out into the night.

Shifters. I should have known they'd be involved in this too. How unfortunate for them that they'd chosen a really bad moment to pick a

fight with me.

I turned to darkness and flew through the open doors, then reformed outside in the midst of a battle. Giant bears and massive wolves fought in the dark street against my angelic allies, while Kassiel and Olivia took on a group of huge hawks in the sky above us. I unleashed the hellfire that had been simmering under my skin ever since learning of Belial's betrayal, and the air became filled with the smell of burnt fur and the guttural roars and whines of dying shifters.

Then a black wolf the size of a bus barreled into me, knocking me to the ground. Eyes that glowed like magma stared at me as two massive paws held me down, their burning claws digging into me, ripping my suit. The wolf's black lips curled into a too-human sneer, as he growled, "Submit, Lucifer."

"Fenrir," I said with a cold laugh. "I'm so honored you decided to leave your little hut in the middle of Montana to come visit me, though your manners could use some work. Then again, that's always been true."

The Archdemon of the shifters snapped at me with his giant fangs in response, but I blasted him with hellfire and he had to leap off me to avoid it. He landed on top of Belial's bar, so large he took up nearly all of the roof, and as he roared he sent burning magma toward me. I used darkness to smother it, and he launched into the air again. He was so big and fast I barely managed to dodge his massive claws. I flew up high, my wings spreading behind me, and spun to face him. He swatted at me with a massive black paw, and I maneuvered around it, then threw more hellfire at him. He blasted it with magma, and we continued the fight on the roof of Belial's bar and other nearby buildings, seeing who would make a mistake first.

Fenrir suddenly raised his head and let out a loud howl that rattled the windows of all the buildings on the street and set off a few car alarms. At his command, the shifters darted away on swift paws and wings, carrying their dead and injured with them.

"Leaving so soon?" I called out.

Fenrir leaped to the top of another building and snarled at me. "We'll meet again—once Pestilence walks the Earth."

He launched himself away from me, and I considered flying after him, but I let him escape. We'd have a reckoning later, I was sure of it. Right now I needed to focus on finding Hannah.

Even though it was the middle of the night, some humans must have seen the battle, because I heard screams and the sound of sirens. Fucking hell. The Archdemons clearly didn't give a shit about hiding our kind from humans anymore. No doubt they thought they would rule over humans like royalty once I was out of the picture. The fools. They ignored the fact that we were greatly outnumbered by humans, and if they banded together against us, it would not end well. For any of us.

I landed in the street, where the others had gathered, and winced a little. Fenrir's claws had carved two long slashes down my chest, and now they burned like I'd been touched by magma. Some of the others had been injured too, but the attack hadn't been a serious one, or Fenrir wouldn't have abandoned it so quickly.

At least he'd confirmed one thing—they were going after Pestilence.

"What was the point of that?" Olivia asked, staring off in the direction the shifters had fled.

"It was a distraction," Samael said, from where he emerged from the sidelines. "I just got a call from Einial. Shifters destroyed our private jet."

"They want to slow us down," I said. Belial and the others had to be on their way to Pestilence's tomb by now. He must have kidnapped Hannah because he suspected I'd moved the tomb, and she was the key to finding it. Hannah and I were the only two people in the world still alive who knew where it was. I'd used only humans for the transport to be extra cautious. Not even Azazel or Samael knew the new location. Since Belial took after me far too much, he must have suspected as much. I'd trained him too well, back when he'd been heir to the throne of Hell.

"I can find us other transportation, but it will take some time," Samael said. "Hotel Immortelle is nearby. We can get cleaned up there while I make the arrangements."

I nodded as I tore off my ruined jacket, even more angry seeing how Fenrir had ruined my Armani suit. Hotel Immortelle was owned by my company, Abaddon Inc. I hated this new delay, but there was really no other choice but to go there and plan our next move.

Marcus eyed the thick gashes across my chest. "You should let me heal that."

"No time," Kassiel said, as the sirens grew louder. "We need to get out of here immediately."

Everyone in the street looked to me for their next command. I had to make a decision—head to Palestine to the old location of the tomb and hope we could catch up to them—or head to England and try to stop them when they arrived at Stonehenge. *If* they went to Stonehenge.

I wrapped darkness around us to better conceal our group. "Head to the hotel, and prepare for a long flight. We're going to London."

HANNAH



I awoke to a low hum and the feeling of being in motion without even moving, along with the smell of recycled air. I kept my eyes closed rather than alert anyone to the fact I'd woken up while I tried to gather some knowledge about my position. I was on a plane, and when I moved my arms, they chinked softly like they'd done overnight in the desert, so the small silver chains appeared to be back.

I didn't hear anything else, so I slowly opened my eyes and looked around. I was in the cargo area of the plane, wedged between crates. I stretched out my neck, trying to remove a kink there from sleeping in such an awkward angle as I took in my surroundings. Two armed men stood by a nearby door that likely led to another part of the plane, but otherwise I was alone.

Belial walked through that doorway with a tray of food in his hands. He set it on one of the crates beside me and then perched on the edge of another one. "Hello, Mother. I'm glad to see you're up."

I stared at him as I tried to work out what to say. The pain of his betrayal was like nothing I'd felt before. Worse than when Jophiel had stolen my memories and my powers. Worse than when Lucifer had taken my life. At least they'd been acting with my best intentions at heart. I couldn't say the same for Belial.

"Where is Azazel?" I managed to ask. "Is she all right?"

"She's fine."

I watched him closely while I spoke the question I was scared to ask. "Are you really working with the other Archdemons? To overthrow

Lucifer?"

"Working with them? No." A dark smile spread across his face, and for a second he looked far too much like his father. "They're working for *me*."

Anger warred with disappointment and guilt, and those emotions clogged my throat so I couldn't speak. How could my own son do this? Was it my fault?

No. Belial had made his own choices, as he'd always done. I might have failed him as a mother, but I couldn't take complete responsibility for my son having shed his conscience somewhere during his very long life.

He gestured to the food he'd set in front of me. "Eat."

"What, and let you poison me?" I pushed the tray away as if to underline my point, but fuck, it smelled good. I was absolutely starving. How long had I been out?

He frowned down at me, as if our positions were reversed and he was the parent disappointed with a willful child. "Of course not. You're not to be hurt in any of this."

I raised my eyebrows as I cast my mind back to when I'd believed I was human. I could still taste the fear from some of those moments, and it was worse now that I knew he was behind them all. "Oh? What about the imps throwing me off a roof?"

His face darkened, his eyebrows pulling down into a fierce glower. "They were not supposed to do that, and the ones involved were punished for it."

His words confirmed that he really was behind it all from the beginning. "And the gargoyles trying to kill me in Lucifer's library? Or the dragons attacking me in the Grand Canyon?"

He waved a dismissive hand. "They were merely trying to kidnap you, nothing more."

"And Adam?" I narrowed my eyes. "You're working with the man who has killed me over and over. How could you do that? Or is that a detail that you've conveniently forgotten?"

"Sometimes we must make allies with our enemies to achieve our greater goal." He sighed as he leaned back on the crate. "Trust me, I have no love for Adam, but he came to me as Gadreel years ago with a proposal to take Lucifer down. I agreed on one condition—that you would not be harmed."

I shook my head, still in disbelief, or maybe just not wanting to believe the horrible truth about my own son. I'd thought we were finally connecting. I'd believed our relationship could be salvaged. And it was all a setup.

"You tricked me," I said, with a lump in my throat. I would not cry. Not in front of him. "You pretended to be kidnapped. You faked our escape attempt. You made them torture you. All to get me to trust you."

"I'm sorry, Mother. It was the only way. I always suspected Lucifer had moved Pestilence's tomb to keep it safe from me."

"For exactly this reason," I muttered.

"Correct. He knows me well." Belial's tone suggested that I didn't, and I agreed with him on this one thing. I didn't know my son at all. "My sources told me that only you and Lucifer were involved in the transport, which meant I needed your help in finding it."

I thought back on everything that had happened the last few days. "How did you know I'd come visit you?"

"Oh, you're very predictable. I knew once you were reborn and had regained your memories you would find me and try to make peace with me. You always do. All I had to do was wait for you to be reborn, and for Gadreel to find you. It took longer than I expected, but as soon as he located you, we were ready to act."

"But why?" My voice cracked. "Why would you do all this?"

"You mean, why am I trying to take down Father again?" Belial asked. "The same reason I tried before. It's time for someone else to rule Hell."

I snorted. "And that person should be you."

"Ideally, yes, but that isn't as important as you might think." He crossed his tattooed arms. "Look at all the democracies around the world. They get new leaders every few years to prevent any one person from becoming too powerful and ruling like a tyrant. Lucifer's held the throne for thousands of years, and the demons are ready for a change."

"But Lucifer's been a good king all this time!"

"Has he?" Belial arched an eyebrow. "There are many who would disagree with that. Haven't you noticed he favors the Fallen and has tasked them with keeping the other demons in line? As if demons need to be babysat and corralled like unruly toddlers. Or what of his decision to expel everyone from Hell and force them to live on Earth?"

"He had to do it to save demons from extinction. The war had to be ended, and Hell had become unlivable."

"Many of the Archdemons believe otherwise. They wish to return there and begin to rebuild. To create a new world for all demons."

"And you think they'll let you rule it?" I asked, with a sharp laugh. "Have they failed to notice you're not a real demon either?"

He scowled at that, as if I'd insulted him. "I have no interest in going to Hell. I plan to rule those who remain on Earth—the Nephilim like me, and those demons and Fallen who prefer to stay here. The Archdemons can fight amongst themselves over how to rule Hell once they get there."

I could only stare at him in horror. "What happens to me in this grand plan of yours? And Lucifer?"

"You'll be safe, of course. Safer than with Lucifer, because of the deal I made with Adam. As for Father..." He shrugged, but his eyes were hard. "That depends a lot on him. I don't want to hurt him. I don't want him dead. But sometimes casualties happen in a revolution. If he won't step aside peacefully, he will have to be removed."

His callous words shook me to my core. Did he truly not care if his father lived or died? Or was this his pride speaking? Of course, he'd tried this once before. The only reason he wasn't on the throne of Hell now was because he'd failed. Back then, I'd thought Lucifer's punishment too harsh. Now I wasn't sure it had been strong enough.

I straightened up, as much as I could in my chains, and adopted a commanding tone. "Lucifer is my mate, and I am his queen. If you think I'll sit back and let you overthrow him—and possibly kill him—you are sorely mistaken."

"How can you stand beside him after everything he's done?" Belial slammed his fist on the crate beside him. "I've watched you die so many times. Over and over, for thousands of years. An endless cycle of finding you only to lose you all over again. And it's all his fault. You wouldn't be cursed if not for Lucifer."

"Belial, no." My heart ached for all he'd seen and all I'd been powerless to prevent. "You can't blame Lucifer for the curse, any more than you can blame me. It was all *Adam's* fault. He's the one who killed me all those times. *He* put us through all of this. It was his hand, not your father's. How could you possibly work with him?" I blew out a breath, feeling an urgent need to make Belial see the truth instead of this lie he'd

concocted in his head. "You said the two of you made a deal, but just the other week he tried to kill me. Did he mention that to you?"

Belial's mouth twitched down, but he didn't reply.

"He also killed your sister." I hadn't planned on telling any of my sons about this loss, at least not yet, when it was still so fresh in my mind, but Belial had to know what type of man he was dealing with.

"Sister?" Belial asked.

I could barely get the words out, but I struggled to continue. "In my last life, when Adam killed me, I was pregnant. He took my unborn daughter from me. Your sister. I bet he left that fact out too when you made that deal."

Belial's jaw clenched. "I had no idea. I'm sorry."

"Besides, the curse is broken now anyway." I leaned back on the crate behind me, feeling hollow and exhausted after my last confession. "If I die, I die for good. If Adam kills me again, there's no coming back this time. Do you still trust him, knowing that?"

My son's eyes widened, just a touch, just enough to let me know this was a surprise to him. But then he recovered quickly and pushed the tray toward me again. "Eat your food. We're going to land in London in a few hours."

I turned away, unable to deal with my traitorous son any longer. After Jophiel had given me back my memories and I'd learned about the death of my daughter, connecting with my sons had become vitally important to me. Family was *everything*, I'd realized, and it had become my mission to bring us all together again. Maybe I'd been too optimistic to hope that I could turn us all into one big happy family so quickly, but now I realized there had never been a chance of that. Belial had gone too far into the darkness, turning his back on his family and everyone who loved him.

"Nobody is going to hurt you. You're under my protection now." Belial rose to his feet and hovered over me, waiting for me to look at him, but I didn't budge. "And once Lucifer is gone, you'll see it's for the best. For everyone."

LUCIFER



The large, gray stones loomed around me, only illuminated by the thin sliver of the moon. I patted one of them with the flat of my palm. They were holding up well, considering the level of interest the humans seemed to have in Stonehenge. Timepiece? Alien stone circle? Who the hell knew what other conspiracy theories they'd cooked up between them. I didn't care. The more, the better, as long as they didn't realize I'd hidden one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the center of these stones. I was pretty sure *that* conspiracy theory hadn't surfaced.

Not that I'd created Stonehenge, of course. I'd simply needed another ancient place that was heavy with the magic of the Elder Gods, like the Tower of Jericho, to hide all traces of Pestilence's energy and power. When I'd chosen this as the new location for the tomb, hundreds of years ago, I'd had no idea it would turn into a bizarre tourist attraction. Humans really were odd little creatures.

But perhaps they sensed the god's latent power, deep under the surface. Perhaps they were drawn to it, and that's why they flocked to this place in droves. Over one million visitors a year, or so I was told. I nearly laughed at the thought of how angry that would make Pestilence, if he knew what was going on above him.

Focusing on my amusement was a good distraction from dwelling on my fear and anger. I'd received word that all my guards at the Tower of Jericho had been slaughtered, but that the attackers had vanished soon after that. The report had no word about Hannah, Belial, or Azazel—or much else for that matter. But Baal had come through and confirmed they

were heading to England in search of the tomb, and that Hannah was still alive.

So here we were, waiting to ambush them. I couldn't decide if I was more angry at the thought of seeing Adam or Belial. All I cared about at this point was rescuing Hannah and stopping Pestilence's resurrection. Damn everything else.

I flew up to join the others who were circling overhead in the night sky. Samael and Kassiel kept the area shrouded in darkness, while Olivia used her angelic power of invisibility to hide us from onlookers. Callan and Marcus looked ready for battle, while Bastien scanned the area with his Ofanim senses, which would be able to see through any illusions Nemesis or other imps used. Having a group of angelic allies was certainly proving to be useful these days.

"They're coming," Bastien said, pointing toward the south. I followed his gaze but saw nothing there. "Nemesis is hiding their approach, but they're all there. Belphegor. Adam. Belial. A green-haired fae male. And about twenty or thirty imps and gargoyles, from the looks of it."

"Any sign of Hannah?" I asked. "Or Azazel?"

"No."

Damn.

"Get ready," Samael called out, and the others readied their weapons, including the other loyal Fallen who had answered my call to battle.

Bastien released a flash of light, and the demons in the air and on the ground were suddenly visible to all of us. I caught sight of Belphegor in the sky, surrounded by gargoyles, and I felt her try to use her Archdemon power of sleep on us. We'd prepared for this though, and Marcus used his healing powers to combat it, protecting our group. He flew after her, with Callan at his side wielding burning light against the gargoyles.

Nemesis suddenly turned into dozens of versions of herself, all of them wielding long, deadly black claws. Bastien shot the illusions with the light of truth, while Kassiel worked to take down the real Nemesis. My Fallen clashed with the gargoyles, and Olivia used her succubus seduction to distract and confuse the imps. Adam, Belial, and the green-haired fae were in the back of the group, and I surged toward them, while searching for any sign of Hannah and Azazel.

There! Far in the rear, away from the brawl, some soldiers were holding Hannah and Azazel captive. I turned away from Belial and Adam,

losing them amidst the chaos, and shouted for Samael to follow me.

Before I could even get there, Hannah and Azazel bucked free and knocked their captors out, then started running across the grass toward me. Silver cuffs circled their wrists, like the ones they used in Penumbra Prison, no doubt blocking their powers.

"Hannah!" I swooped down and grabbed my mate into my arms. She let out a surprised cry, and then pressed her face against my neck.

"Lucifer! I knew you'd come!" She pulled back and looked at me. Her eyes were wide and glazed like she'd had a shock. "Belial! It's him!"

"I know."

"He betrayed us," she continued, as if she hadn't heard me. "He's behind all this. We have to stop him!"

I met her eyes. Hearing Hannah's words had confirmed what I'd already suspected, and it only made the dark pit inside me grow larger. "I know."

Samael picked up Azazel, who looked pissed at being carried around like a child who hadn't gotten her wings yet. I worked at the cuffs nullifying Hannah's magic—Adam was certainly taking no chances this time. Or maybe I should blame Belial.

"Who has the key?" I asked.

Hannah's eyes hardened. "Adam, I think."

I'd figured as much. "We'll deal with them later."

We flew back toward the circle of stones and the battle, toward the sound of guttural cries and metal striking metal, toward flashes of light and bursts of darkness. Then there was a great rumbling below us, as the earth opened up in the center of the stones. The green-haired fae stood beside the new pit, and he used his earth magic to excavate the tomb from deep in the ground. Damn Earth Court—why was one of them helping these traitorous demons?

The ancient black tomb looked as new as the day it had been sealed, with silver and gold symbols—words of power and warning in languages not spoken anymore—completely covering the outside. The tomb had been made long ago by the most powerful fae enchanters, who could imbue objects with the powers of others.

I set Hannah down with Samael and Azazel, out of harm's way, and rushed toward the tomb—but I was too late. Belial stood over it, and time

seemed to stand still as he slashed his hand with a dagger and let the blood drop onto the tomb. The symbols began to glow, drawing everyone's eyes.

The lid of the tomb suddenly burst open, and with it came an enormous blast of power, knocking everyone back with as much force as if we'd been hit by an explosion. Some crashed into the large stones, while others tumbled out of the sky and landed on the grass. I managed to spread my wings and catch myself, but the extreme force still knocked me away from Hannah and the others.

No one moved as Pestilence emerged from his tomb for the first time in thousands of years. I could only watch on in horror, knowing it was too late to stop what was coming.

Pestilence didn't have a body, of course. We'd taken care of that long ago. The Elder Gods couldn't truly be killed, since they were primordial deities representing the basic building blocks of the universe. They could only be weakened and contained.

Pestilence oozed out of his tomb with a putrid odor—the smell of sickness that can't be cured, that rots away at your body until there's nothing left. He rose up like a spirit, a mass of sickly yellow energy that pulsed and buzzed, radiating pure evil and so much power it was oppressive. Now that he was released it would be nearly impossible to capture him again, though he needed a body to come to his full powers.

"I command you to submit," Belial said, his voice hard as he faced down the malignant essence. "Give me your strength so I may defeat my enemies."

The putrid specter laughed, a sound of pure malevolence. It crawled over my skin like a physical touch, oily and painful. "If you want my power, I require a sacrifice of the heart. Something you love. Or...someone."

"No," I yelled, and rushed forward, but half a dozen gargoyles leaped on me to stop me. I bucked them off, using darkness and hellfire. The battle had stopped as we'd watched the horror unfolding in front of us, but now everyone seemed to come out of their daze and the fighting started up again.

"Stop it, Belial!" Hannah yelled, running toward him, her hands still in cuffs, her blond hair flying back.

Belial grabbed her arm and drew her against him, raising a dagger to her neck, and my heart stopped. With a roar, I ignited everyone around me

with blue hellfire, trying to get to my mate before my son could sacrifice her.

Belial looked into Hannah's eyes, and whatever he saw there made him pause. She reached for his face, and at her touch, he dropped the dagger and stepped back, his hands shaking. Unable to sacrifice the one person he still loved.

I slammed into him a second later, knocking us both back into one of the huge stones so hard it actually fell over. He fought me and threw me off him, just in time for us to see Adam standing before Pestilence.

"I command you to serve me," he shouted.

Hannah was only steps away, and I feared he would reach for her as his sacrifice—but then Adam grabbed Belphegor from beside him, and stabbed a glowing knife through her throat. She looked at him with wide, shocked eyes as her life spilled out of her neck, before she collapsed into the grass.

"No!" Belial yelled, and many of the gargoyles around us screamed and cried out.

Pestilence cackled. "A powerful sacrifice. Yes, you will make a fine vessel indeed."

The specter rushed toward Adam and entered his body through his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. He filled Adam with his essence, making his hair turned white, his skin becoming a sickly yellow, while noxious, revolting power emanated from him. Even Adam's allies stepped back, their fear plain to see in their eyes. He'd been dangerous and evil before, but now he was something so much more. A god of vile torment and endless suffering, who turned glowing white eyes toward Hannah.

He reached to grab her and I moved as fast as I could, but Belial was closer. Our son put himself in front of her, blocking Adam's touch. Adam-turned-Pestilence grabbed him by the neck and breathed a cloud of horrible air at him, then threw him down. Belial hit the ground in front of his mother, his face turning green and his eyes glazing over, as his body twitched and curled up in pain.

"No!" I yelled, as I threw hellfire at Adam, trying to distract him from my mate and my son. Samael and Kassiel joined me, wrapping Adam in chains of darkness, while Callan shielded Hannah and Belial with a wall made of light. Behind us the gargoyles fled, their Archdemon defeated, and my allies took out the rest of the imps.

Adam hissed at us and slid away, like the slippery eel he'd always been. And they'd likened me to the serpent? They'd always had the wrong guy.

"Adam!" Nemesis cried out, as Olivia stabbed her with a glowing white dagger on the other side of the stone circle.

A spectral white horse appeared, and Adam grabbed Nemesis around her waist as he mounted it, his motions far faster and more practiced than I'd ever seen them. I ran forward, using my wings to propel me as fast as I could, but he rode away, the horse galloping quicker than any earthly beast could run.

"Help!" Hannah yelled.

I turned toward the sound of her frantic voice and saw her kneeling over Belial. Marcus dropped to his knees beside her and put a hand on our son's forehead. Belial wasn't dead, I saw with relief, just suffering from Pestilence's sickness. Glowing white light surrounded him as Marcus worked to heal him. *Could* he be healed? I wasn't sure.

Slowly the green tint to my eldest son's skin faded away, along with the glaze over his eyes. He still looked weak, but he blinked up at his mother, who was stroking his hair, his head in her lap.

Kassiel crouched down alongside them, his eyes narrowing as he focused on Belial. "How could you? Do you have any idea what you've done?"

Belial stared back at him defiantly, even in his weakened state. "You wouldn't understand. You've always been the favorite."

I pressed my lips together as I stared at my sons. It wasn't a question of favorites. I loved all my children, but this was the second time Belial had led a rebellion against me. How could I forgive him for that?

Belial must've felt better, because he threw Marcus off him, his eyebrows drawn, his expression angry. He launched into the air, flying away as fast as his black and white ombre wings would carry him. Kassiel spread his wings to follow, but I grabbed his arm.

"Let him go."

My youngest son turned to me and raised his eyebrows as he snapped his wings back, his obedience unquestioning. "We can't let him get away! Not after what he's done!"

"Adam is the bigger problem now. We've got to stop him." I turned to Olivia and her other mates. "I need your group to track him down."

Olivia nodded and Callan said, "We'll find him."

Kassiel turned to his mate. "I'm staying with my parents. Don't get close to this asshole. Just keep an eye on him from afar."

Olivia pressed a kiss to his forehead and whispered a few words, then she and her other mates launched into the air in the direction Adam had vanished.

"Come." I turned toward Kassiel, Samael, and Azazel as I spread my wings. "We're going home."

Hannah stared at the spot where Belial had been on the ground, her face pale and her eyes in shock. I lifted her up into my arms, fitting her body to mine, where it belonged. She needed some rest to recover from everything she'd been through at the hands of Adam and our son, and we still needed to get these damn cuffs off.

Then we would figure out how to stop the impending apocalypse.

HANNAH



When Lucifer had said we were going home, I'd expected a long trip back over the Atlantic, not this. My gaze traveled over the large stone manor house and the sprawling grounds, which sparked the feeling of familiarity inside me.

"Welcome to Blackwing Hall," Lucifer said, as he set us down in front of it.

I reluctantly let go of him, still shaken from everything that had happened. I desperately needed a shower and some new clothes—I'd been wearing these for days—and then maybe I could process what I'd just seen.

"This is where we lived when you were Lenore," Lucifer said, as he led me toward the entrance. "Do you remember?"

"I...I think so." The memories were so fleeting and I was so damn tired. Not just physically, but emotionally. I didn't want to think anymore.

"I grew up here," Kassiel said, as he walked beside us. "Here and in Hell. It was important to you that I spend time on Earth too, so I would empathize with humans since so many of your past lives were as one."

Yes, that sounded right. Standing here, in front of this house—our home—felt so familiar. Memories floated through my mind of our family being together here. Once I'd had a chance to recover I'd like to explore them some more, but this wasn't the time.

A blond woman in a pantsuit walked out of the impressive, wooden front door at the top of the stone steps. "Everything is ready for you, my lord." She turned toward me and bowed her head. "My lady."

"Thank you, Einial," Lucifer said as he swept through the door while holding my hand.

I stumbled forward through the great entryway, and then Lucifer paused and held up my hand, looking at my wrist, which still had the silver cuff on it blocking my powers.

"We need to get these off," Lucifer said with a growl.

"Here," Kassiel said, stepping forward and holding out a small silver wand, about the size of his pinkie finger. "I got this off Adam during the fight. Before he turned into that *thing*."

"Good work, son." Lucifer took the object and touched it to my wrists. The cuffs instantly clicked open, and a rush of power and a sense of wholeness filled me. I took a deep breath and stood a little straighter, already feeling more like myself again.

He passed the key to Samael, who unlocked Azazel's cuffs, as he asked, "I'm assuming our suite is ready?"

Einial nodded. "Yes, Samael asked that I prepare the bedrooms and main living areas. Everything has been looked after very well over the years by the staff."

"Good." Lucifer rested a hand on my lower back, steadying me as he addressed the others. "We'll discuss everything after Hannah's had a chance to recover."

We left them in the main hall, and Lucifer led me down long corridors that I barely noticed, until we entered a suite, the one we'd occupied before, so many years ago. I glimpsed dark furnishings and a large four-poster bed, but couldn't really focus on anything at the moment.

Lucifer turned to me and took me into his arms. "I was so worried."

I clung to him tightly, so relieved to be with him again. He pressed his lips to mine, the kiss soft and sweet—reverent almost. I relaxed against his chest, savoring his presence. The scent of him was so familiar. It wove through so many of my memories over the years. Lucifer. My rock. My constant. My husband.

"Are you all right?" he asked, his gaze raking over me. "Did they hurt you?"

"I'm okay, but I could really use a shower and some fresh clothes."

"I'll have some brought to you." Lucifer pulled out his phone and sent out a text, probably to Samael or Einial. "Get as much rest as you need, and when you wake, we should have some news about Adam."

"He has Pestilence *inside* him now." I still couldn't believe what I'd witnessed. It seemed impossible, like something from a dream or a movie. I sank to the bed as some of the shock from the past few hours caught up to me. "He nearly killed Belial. The destruction he could unleash..."

I shivered as I imagined what Adam would do to me if he found me. He'd killed me so many times before, and all he had to do now was breathe on me. I covered my mouth briefly and shook my head as I imagined what he might do to any mortals he came across. There were no words to describe the horrors in my head.

I looked up at Lucifer. "How do we stop him?"

He rubbed the back of his neck, his brows furrowed. "It won't be easy. It took many angels, demons, and fae to take down the Four Horsemen when they were loose before, back when you were Eve. They're impossible to fully kill, which is why we destroyed their bodies and trapped their essence in magically-sealed tombs. We'll need to either capture them again, or send them to the Void realm, with the other Elder Gods."

I ran a hand through my dirty, matted hair with a sigh. "Then we'll need to act quickly before more of the Horsemen are freed."

"Yes, now that the Archdemons have released Pestilence, they'll go after War next. It's only a matter of time."

"War—he's buried in Heaven, isn't he?" I asked.

"He is, which should give us some time. Like Hell, Heaven has been sealed off, and very few can enter it."

I rubbed my wrists, which were still a bit sore from the cuffs. "How do we get in?"

Lucifer slid off his jacket and tossed it aside, looking somewhere between casual and disheveled. "There are keys, but only a few remain, and I highly doubt any of the Archdemons have one."

"Do *you* have one?"

He lifted an eyebrow. "No, I haven't had a key to Heaven in a very long time. But I'm sure we can find someone with one."

I pressed my palms to my eyes, knowing I needed to get up and shower, but the thought of moving was too exhausting to consider. Especially when my heart still ached so much.

"I can't believe Belial would go this far," I whispered.

"I can," Lucifer said, his voice sharp.

"I think there's some good left in him," I ventured, remembering when Belial dropped the knife, and the lost look in his eyes when he couldn't sacrifice me. "If I could just get through to him..."

"There's no use. He's too far gone." Lucifer's jaw clenched. "It's my fault, not yours. I haven't been the best father to our firstborn son. If I could change the past, I would. But there's no hope for a reconciliation with Belial at this point."

Jutting out my chin, I shook my head. "I refuse to believe that."

"Hannah, you've got to stop harking after the past." His features hardened as he spoke, his eyes becoming cold and unfamiliar. "It's done. He's broken. There's no fixing him."

I rose to my feet and glared at him. "Belial's our *son*, and we will *not* give up on him."

Lucifer's eyes burned as he stared back at me. "I already gave him a second chance once. I won't do it again. Not this time."

"We're his parents! It's our job to give him a second chance, and a third, and a fourth, until we finally bring him back to us!" I was so angry and frustrated that darkness I didn't know how to control lashed out at Lucifer, making him lurch back in surprise. It disappeared an instant later, so fast it made me wonder if I was seeing things.

"What was that?" Lucifer asked, his brow furrowing. "Did you just use darkness?"

"I don't know!" Rising to my feet, I shot him my most scathing glare. "All I know is that I won't be staying with you tonight."

I stalked out of the room before he could say anything further and before I needed to slow down and think about what I'd just done. My hands were trembling and I stumbled forward, nearly running into Einial, who was carrying some clothes and a towel with her.

She regained her balance quickly. "Oh! I was just bringing these to your suite."

"Thank you." I glanced back at the door I'd just slammed behind me. "But I'll be needing my own room now."

hen I opened my eyes the next morning, Zel was on the foot of my bed playing on her phone.

“Morning,” I said groggily, no longer surprised by anything she did.

“Come fight.” She slipped her phone away, but I couldn’t see where to in one of her usual skin-tight, leather outfits. It was more straps and cross-crosses than anything else. “I’m bored.”

Somehow I doubted it was boredom that had brought her here. Like me, she'd been through an ordeal, and Azazel often got out her emotions by punching things.

"All right." The thought of fighting appealed to me more than I expected. Maybe I had some shit to work off too.

She leaped to her feet with a triumphant grin. “Hurry and get dressed. I'll meet you outside.”

I was pleased to see that Einial had brought me more clothes, including some that were suitable for exercising in. Samael's new assistant seemed to be well on top of things.

Ten minutes later, we were on the back lawn. I eyed Zel as she went through some warm-up moves, looking beautiful and deadly. She stretched in the fine drizzle that seemed to keep the air at one hundred percent cold humidity. I glanced up at the gray clouds that seemed to be a permanent fixture in the sky. I'd never seen such a gloomy place. As I warmed up, the damp soon permeated my clothes, and I was glad I'd tied my hair back—it would have been a ball of frizz, otherwise.

It suddenly began raining and Zel stretched her arms to the sky and cackled. “Yes! Bring it on!”

It was official. She might have lost her damn mind. I hugged my arms around myself, already soaked and shivering. "You're enjoying this weather?"

"I love it. It's so nice to be back here instead of hot, dry Las Vegas." She threw me some side-eye. “You know, as Lenore, you loved this weather too.”

That made sense, since I'd been a Fallen then. But angels tended to want to live in warm, sunny locations, and I was no exception. I shivered and rubbed my arms. If only Einial had prepared for this and gotten me a thicker jacket to wear. Hell, *any* jacket. She must have forgotten I wasn't a Fallen too.

“Come on.” Zel jerked her head to a large expanse of lawn under the cover of some tall, sprawling trees. “The sooner you start moving, the sooner you’ll warm up.”

I huffed and headed over, knowing she was right. I couldn’t just stand around waiting for the sun to appear. Right now, it didn’t even feel like England got a turn with the sun—like the sun had rolled over in bed rather than bothering to rise.

We launched into our usual combat routine, as we’d done during our other training sessions, before we’d been kidnapped. Moving did warm me up, and it helped me burn off some of the stress of the past few days too. Things started to feel almost normal again.

As we sparred, my mind drifted to my time here as Lenore, when I’d trained with Zel just like this. Zel and that other woman with the red hair.

I dodged a quick jab and twisted away and spun back. “Being here brings back a lot of memories. I keep seeing another woman with you in them. A woman with red hair.” I ducked Zel’s swinging fist and moved to counter it. “What happened to her?”

Azazel froze, her hands lowering from their defensive position, and my blow hit her right in the face. Harder than I’d planned, because I never thought my punch would actually land.

She staggered back and spat, her bright red blood hitting the ground between us. “What the fuck, Hannah?”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to—”

“Why would you bring that up?” She rubbed her palm roughly over her jaw, muttering a sentence where I caught nothing but the last couple of words. “Stupid angel.”

I watched her, realizing I’d hit a nerve. I didn’t want to upset her further, but I also sensed this was something important, something I should know. Azazel was my best friend, I now understood. Not just in this lifetime, but in *all* of them, going back all the way to Eve. If there was some pain in her past, I wanted to be able to help her through it.

“Zel,” I said, moving closer to my friend, my voice softening. “What happened?”

“Shut up.” Her voice was cold and hard, and her face looked really pissed now. Her anger masked her pain, but it didn’t conceal it completely. Not from me, anyway. “Her name was Veslea. She was my fated mate. Like Lucifer is to you.”

"She was a shifter," I whispered. As soon as I heard the name, more came back to me. "A hawk. She worked for Lucifer during the Great War. No, that's not right. She worked for *me*." She was my scout. My spy. My messenger. The person I trusted most, other than Azazel.

"Yeah, thanks for the reminder. You don't have to regurgitate memories for me as they occur to you." Zel half turned away, and when she spoke again, her voice was smaller. "Veslea was killed by an angel not long after you—Lenore—died."

A wave of grief washed over me, and I gripped Zel's hand. "I'm so sorry."

She didn't shake me off, but nodded a little at my words.

"You thought Lenore was killed by an angel, too, didn't you?" I asked, fitting all the pieces together. This was why Zel hated angels so much. It made total sense now. It probably explained a lot of her attitude too, including why she'd been so rude to me at first. Imagine if you'd lost your mate, and your best friend kept dying on you, leaving you alone. How hard it must be to get close to anyone after that, fearing they might leave you next.

"Yeah, I didn't know it was Adam until Gadreel betrayed us." She snorted. "Not that Adam doing it makes it any better. That asshole."

Her voice sounded so bitter...and sad. Gadreel had been her friend for over a hundred years. She'd lost another person close to her.

I wrapped my arms around her, resting my head against hers, taking a moment to grieve with her. She stiffened, but then she lightly rested a hand on my back too, giving me the bare minimum of a hug in return. She'd held me like this not long ago, when I'd remembered who I was. Now it was my turn to offer her some silent comfort. I grieved for Veslea too, who'd always been loyal and exceptionally clever and so full of life. A perfect soul, gone too soon, lost to the horrors of war.

Azazel pulled away. "Come on. We have to get you in shape if we're going to face Adam and Belial again."

Her mention of my son made me apprehensive again. I had no idea what I'd do when I saw him again.

"What's the deal with you and Belial?" I asked, as we moved back into combat-ready stances.

She blew out a breath. "I killed his girlfriend during his last rebellion, when she was storming the palace in Hell. He hates me for that, and I hate

him for being a traitor to his own kind."

Her words about my son made my hackles raise, and darkness lashed out of me again toward her. She rolled out of the way and yelled, "What the fuck was that?"

I spread my hands as the darkness vanished. "I...uh... I channeled some darkness last night. And back at the bar when we were attacked. Think you could help me figure it out?"

Zel's eyebrows arched, the movement rapid. "You did *what*?"

"Maybe I'm becoming a Fallen," I said with a laugh.

She scowled at me. "It doesn't work like that."

"How does it work?" I asked.

She narrowed her eyes at me, as if she thought I was messing with her. "The only people who became Fallen were the ones who left with Lucifer in the beginning. We settled in Hell, but we didn't do well in the land of darkness. Angels need light to survive, and there's not much of it there. So Lucifer summoned Nyx, the Elder Goddess of night, and begged her to help us. She turned all of us into demons, giving us many of their abilities—the ability to see in the dark, the immunity to the cold, and the power to use darkness instead of light. After that, all Fallen were sired from one of the original, like me and Samael."

I nodded slowly, her words bringing back knowledge I'd lost. "And yet, the other demons don't believe you're really the same as them."

"It's bullshit. They were created by the Elder Gods, just like we were." She put her hands on her hips. "So there's no way you, an angel, could suddenly be using darkness powers now."

"But it keeps happening whenever I'm upset. Just like my angelic powers did, before I could control them."

Zel's brow furrowed. "Then we'd better work on getting these under control too."

I was sure the question in her mind was exactly the same as the one in mine. How the hell was I able to use both light and darkness?

LUCIFER



Olivia and her mates returned with news of Adam in the afternoon, and Samael summoned us all into the great hall of the manor so we could discuss our next move. We'd spread out around the banquet table, and I sat at the end with Hannah beside me, though she still wasn't talking to me after last night. She'd spent most of the day training with Azazel, and she looked a lot better than she had last night. Last night, when she'd somehow used darkness against me. I planned to ask her about that later, once we were alone. For now, we had more urgent matters to discuss.

"How bad is it?" I asked, already sure of the answer. Given the population increase the world over, Pestilence's arrival would be about a thousand times worse than the last time. So many innocent mortals... Well, perhaps not *innocent*, but certainly undeserving of the kind of destruction Adam currently wrought.

"It's bad," Callan said. He'd always been rather blunt.

Olivia's face was pale. "Adam vanished in London, but he left a trail of sickness along his path."

"Hundreds of mortals have fallen ill," Bastien added in his matter-of-fact voice.

"I couldn't keep up." Marcus bowed his head. "There were just too many who required healing."

"I'll notify Archangel Raphael to send Malakim to minimize the damage Adam's causing." My blood simmered as anger twisted through me. "The mortal world can't find out about this. It endangers us all."

Not to mention, if humans discovered the existence of Pestilence, it would create an immense global event, and anything that humans did in response would interfere with my own control over the situation. I pulled out my phone and shot off a quick text, the easiest way of communicating with Raphael, then began another one off to Gabriel, the leader of the Archangels. My fingers flew across the phone screen and the texts were sent off. In the old days, when we wished to confer with the angels, we had messengers. Modern technology was truly incredible.

"There was no sign of where Adam went?" Kassiel asked.

Olivia shook her head. "No, we lost him in the city."

"Wherever he emerges, death and disease will follow," Samael said. "We must stop him before it's too late."

I slipped my phone back into my pocket. "Even though we don't know where he is, we know where the Archdemons will go next. Heaven."

"To release War?" Azazel asked, leaning forward. "Are they that stupid?"

"Apparently," I said dryly. "The good news is that Heaven is sealed off, and only a few people have a key. Archangel Michael had one, which should have been passed to you, Callan, upon his death."

Callan's eyebrows darted up. "I didn't even know there was a way into Heaven anymore."

I drummed my fingers along the wooden table. "Yes, Heaven and Hell both have a few keys that allow entry, though they're extremely rare and hardly ever used. The last time I know of the key to Heaven being used was just before your birth, Callan. Michael and Jophiel wanted you born there." Truly, angelic pride put my own to shame.

"Also news to me." He rolled his eyes. "Great. I bet my mother has it."

"At the very least, she might know where it is," I ventured, though I didn't want to see Jophiel either—I still hadn't forgiven her for hiding Hannah from me.

"We'll have to pay my sister a visit," Hannah said, her voice firm. "She owes me, anyway."

I glanced at her face, noting how her mouth was set in a grim line at the thought of seeing her sister. Jophiel owed *both* of us for what she'd done.

Samael cleared his throat. "I also have some news about Belial. Our contacts at Penumbra Prison said he arrived there a few hours ago. He

demanded to see Archangel Azrael, but we don't know the details of the conversation, or where Belial went after that."

Azrael had been the corrupt former leader of the Archangels, but he'd been sent to Penumbra Prison to rot after Kassiel and the others had taken him down. Since I'd helped them, Azrael would no doubt be willing to help my son move against me in any way he could.

"Belial must have gone there to get information on how to get to Heaven." I closed my fingers into a fist. Damn him. My own son, always a step ahead of me in plotting my downfall.

"Azrael tried to use the Staff of Eternity to open Heaven and Hell, but we destroyed it," Olivia said. "I doubt he would go through all that trouble if he'd had a key."

"Perhaps," I said. "But he might have told Belial where he might find one. Even more reason to visit Jophiel immediately."

"I'd like to visit the prison myself and see if I can learn anything more," Samael said.

I nodded. "Take Azazel with you."

"I'm ready," she said, rising to her feet. "No sense in wasting time."

Hannah stood too. "Let's make an early night of it. Tomorrow will be a long day."

Everyone filed out of the room to head to their own suites. Everyone except me and Hannah. She gave me an icy look as she prepared to part, but I said, "Wait."

She paused at that and turned around at the command in my voice.

I leaned back against the table and crossed my arms. "I watched you training with Azazel from one of the windows earlier. Were you going to tell me about your new powers?"

She set her hands on her hips. "First, don't take that tone with me. Second, I have no idea what's happening to me. Suddenly I can use darkness *and* light."

"Show me."

Her brow furrowed as she held out her hands and concentrated. I carefully schooled my features, deliberately keeping my expression blank so as not to reveal my shock as Hannah proceeded to produce both light and dark magic, one in each palm. Impossible. Even I couldn't do that.

"Are you using powers from your past lives?" I asked. "Do you have any of the other abilities you once had? Persephone's magic, for

example?"

She shook her head and cut off the flow of magic. "No idea. I don't think so. Not that I know of, anyway."

I stroked my chin. "Very curious."

"I'm going to bed," she said, turning for the door again.

I moved in front of her to block her path. "No. Not without me."

She arched an eyebrow. "Excuse me?"

"I told you I was done with you sleeping somewhere other than by my side. I let it pass last night, because you clearly were exhausted and not thinking straight, but no more. I'll tie you to the bed if I have to, but your place is nowhere else than beside me."

Hannah's eyes flashed, but not in anger. Oh, she liked that idea, even if she wouldn't want to admit it. "I'll sleep where I want to sleep."

I scooped her up into my arms. Perhaps a little tying up was exactly what she needed. "It seems you require a reminder that you are my mate and my queen."

"Lucifer!" she cried, but she didn't fight me. She liked it when I exerted my dominance in bed, even if she wanted to be equal in all other areas of our relationship.

I carried her to our suite, my heart thudding as she stared up at me with defiant eyes. The bedroom door flew back as I kicked it open, revealing the four-poster bed in the center of the room.

I drew the blankets back and laid her on the bed, then used my own powers of darkness to shred her clothes, removing them without even touching her. She gasped at the sudden touch of my shadows as her skin was exposed, and her nipples hardened in the cool night air. I raked my eyes over her naked body possessively.

I commanded the shadows to become binding, twining around her wrists before anchoring to the posts at the headboard. Her eyes widened, but her cheeks were flushed with desire, and she didn't protest. She could have stopped this at any moment with her own magic, but she didn't. She wanted me to continue.

My cock strained against my trousers as my gaze roamed her body, bared before me. The shadows yanked her legs apart next, binding her ankles to the other posts, exposing her already wet pussy to me. Then I let the darkness run over her body like a caress, stroking her nipples, sliding against her clit, while I watched. She let out a breath and her pupils dilated

as she moved her hips, and one of my shadow tentacles slid inside her pussy.

"I don't even need to touch you to make you come." I slowly fucked her with my magic, showing her who was in command, while she whimpered and writhed.

Hannah needed a lesson, a reminder that I was her king, and she belonged to me. I climbed up onto the bed and kneeled over her, yanking open my trousers and pulling out my cock. "Open your mouth."

Her lips formed a slight pout, and I rubbed the head of my cock against them, making them part for me. I slid my hard length into that perfect little mouth, smothering her cries as I made the tentacles thrust deeper into her, teasing her clit at the same time. She gasped around me as I rubbed against her tongue, and I groaned at the exquisite feel of having her soft lips around me again.

With her hands and wrists bound, all she could do was take everything I gave her, while she gazed up at me with wide eyes and moaned around me. Her mouth was so wet and hot, and I loved the way she tried to suck me deeper, even as she was being thoroughly ravaged by the shadows around us. I grabbed the edge of the headboard above her as I rocked in and out of her mouth, and her little whimpers got more frantic as my magic brought her to orgasm. I spilled my seed into her mouth and across her lips, making her drink it down, before I finally released her.

She watched me with a dazed look as I climbed off the bed and removed my clothes. My cock was already hard again. There were benefits to being the devil, after all.

I trailed my fingers over her smooth, flat stomach, over her ribs and to the curve of her breast. She tensed, not even breathing, as she waited to see what I'd do. She was powerless, but happy to be that way. No, she had plenty of power, and we both knew it. Hannah was in my bed, bound and spread for me because she wanted to be.

I drew closer to her, then bent over her beautiful body. "My queen."

I took one of her nipples between my lips, sliding my tongue over it as I sucked it deeper into my mouth. She moaned, the sound coming from deep within her, and she twisted as she tried to move her hands and legs. "I want to touch you."

"This isn't about what you want. This is all about me."

"Then take me," she begged.

I lifted myself over her body, lightly touching her nipples with my chest and she bit her lip at the contact, muffling a groan. My cock nudged against her entrance, and I surged forward, filling her completely. Proving she was mine. Again. Still. Always.

She arched her hips against me, taking me even deeper as she strained against her shadow bindings. I bowed my head and kissed her roughly as I thrust into her, my rhythm gaining in pace. Then I reared back, grabbing her hips and lifting them up to meet me as I kneeled between her thighs. She cried out over and over with each stroke of my cock, and I loved seeing her give herself up to me like this.

As her cries became more frantic, I rocked into her faster and harder, using my immortal strength and speed to fuck her like no one else could. As an angel, she could take it, and soon she tensed beneath me, her face contorting in a way that truly made me king. She writhed and screamed my name, and I thrust inside her one last time before the pulse of her body around my cock tipped me over the edge.

The shadow bindings around Hannah's wrists and ankles disappeared, and I gathered her up in my arms. She wrapped herself around me and I held her close, looking into her blue eyes, so full of truth and light. The perfect match to my darkness.

"I love you," I said, my chest suddenly tight. "And I need you. Now more than ever."

"Yes, you do," she replied with a slight smirk. Then she touched my face tenderly. "Whatever else happens between us, I will always fight by your side. Now and forever. I am your queen."

I gripped her tighter at the thought of what we up against in the days to come. For once, I wasn't sure we would be victorious—but at least we would face it together.

HANNAH



During the entire long plane ride from London to San Francisco, my thoughts had flitted between apprehension at seeing Jophiel again, fear at what Adam and Belial might be doing now, and exhilaration from the previous night with Lucifer. Even when I was angry, I couldn't resist him, and the way he clutched my hand in the limo now told me he didn't want me anywhere except right beside him. Lucky for him, I had no interest in being anywhere else.

We drew to a stop in front of the obnoxiously large white house my sister owned, and I took a deep breath as our driver opened the car door. Even as an angel I had to take a minute to stretch my back when I stepped out of the limo. After an eleven-hour flight and then the drive from the airport, I was ready for a strenuous yoga session. Yoga...or something else athletic. I eyed Lucifer's ass as I followed him up the steps. Callan was right at my heels, along with Olivia and her other mates.

Jophiel threw the door open and stared at us, her eyes wide, her mouth slightly agape before she seemed to recall herself. "This is quite the unexpected visit. I'm happy to see you..." Her eyes landed on Lucifer and her tone turned frosty. "Some of you."

"Can we come in?" I asked. "We have something urgent we need to discuss."

"Of course." She stepped back. "Come inside."

Lucifer and I stepped inside first, then moved out of the way so Callan and Olivia could follow us. Kassiel, Bastien, and Marcus remained outside, keeping an eye out in case the Archdemons arrived.

Jophiel put her hand on Callan's arm, looking up at her son with love. She touched his face gently. "I'm so pleased to see you. It's been too long."

He bowed his head slightly. "I wish we were here under better circumstances."

She turned to Olivia next and gave her a nod, but no other acknowledgment. I sensed this was the reason for the tension between Callan and his mother. Or at least one of the reasons.

Jophiel led the way to her living room and we all settled around the space, taking spots on the couch or sitting in the fancy armchairs, though Olivia remained standing long enough to pick up one of the tiny crystal angels on display.

"Please don't touch those," Jophiel said in a stern voice. Olivia quickly set it down and took a seat beside Callan, while Jophiel studied each of us in turn. "I can tell this isn't a social call. Why are you here?"

"The Archdemons have released Pestilence," Lucifer said flatly. No preamble, no sugar-coating. Just the facts. "He's possessed Adam's body."

Jophiel's face paled, and her fingers curled at the base of her throat. "No. The first Horseman? Why? How?"

"It's a long story, one we don't really have time for right now," I said, knowing Jophiel would feel the truth in my words. "But we all saw it with our own eyes. It's real."

Lucifer leaned forward, meeting Jophiel's stunned expression. "We both know that means War is next. We need Michael's key to Heaven so we can be ready to stop them."

"Michael's key?" Jophiel asked, still in shock from everything we'd just told her.

"Do you have it?" Callan asked.

"Yes. I was saving it for when you were ready." She turned her glare upon Lucifer again. "But I won't give it to the King of Hell, no matter the circumstances."

Callan rose to his feet, and his large form seemed to command the room. "That key is my birthright. I should be the one protecting it."

"No," Jophiel said, completely unaffected by Callan's display. "It's safer with me. You've clearly failed to stop Pestilence. What makes you think you can stop War too?"

"Jo, please," I said. Maybe a direct plea would help her see beyond her old prejudices against Lucifer. "You're in danger as long as you have the

key. It's a target on your back. Adam or one of the Archdemons will find you eventually."

Her face registered the merest hint of surprise. "I'm shocked you care."

"Of course I do. You're my sister." I spread my hands. "I'm pissed at you. I'm not sure I'll ever be able to forgive what you did. But I still love you. I don't want you to die. And we really need your help."

"If War is freed, it will mean the end of peace," Lucifer said. "Not just for humans, but for all of us."

"Yes, I've heard stories of what happened last time from my parents." Jophiel pressed her lips together in a tight line as she considered. "Though I grew up hating demons, and you most of all, Lucifer, I supported Michael in ending the Great War. I have no wish to go to war again." Her eyes rested on Callan and then on Olivia, and her face softened. "Especially when my son has found happiness."

Olivia's eyes widened. I wondered if this was the first time Jophiel had ever hinted at accepting her as Callan's mate. I wanted to tell her not to take it personally. Jophiel saw everything in black and white, and Olivia's very existence was a shade of gray.

"Thank you," Callan said, reaching forward to squeeze his mother's hand.

She gave him a soft smile as she rose to her feet. "I'll go get the key, but I want to be part of the fight against Pestilence. If you go to Heaven, take me with you."

"Very well," Lucifer said, inclining his head slightly.

She walked from the room, and I blew out a small breath as my shoulders slumped in relief. As we waited, Lucifer sat back in his armchair and crossed his legs, like this was his place instead of his former enemy's. Callan's hands tightened around Olivia's, and she leaned against his shoulder.

I was watching them when something at the corner of my eye made me turn my head. "What was that?"

"What?" Callan asked, instantly alert.

I stared at the wall on the other side of the room. The one with the dresser against it. There had been movement there, like a ripple in the air. Everyone's gaze followed mine to where I'd seen...something. I stood and

walked closer and felt a sense of wrongness, like when someone told a lie, except it was coming from that corner.

Using a move Bastien had taught me, I lifted my hand and light blazed from my palm as I directed it toward the wall. The illusion was ripped apart, revealing Adam and Nemesis standing in the corner of the room. No one had sensed them before—not even Jophiel. Nemesis was more powerful than I'd known.

Lucifer and the others immediately leaped to their feet, responding to the new threat. But before we could react, Adam raised his arms, the air turning thick and sludgy in front of him, and it spread farther into the room, coating everything with an oily film. It happened so fast, I didn't even have time to draw on my powers, and then the others were bending over and coughing behind me. Only I seemed to be spared.

Adam looked like something from a nightmare, his skin yellow and blistered, his white hair coming out of his scalp in clumps, leaving raw, bald patches that oozed a putrid looking liquid. When he turned his gaze on me, his glowing white eyes had taken on a glint of madness, almost like he was feverish, which he likely was. Perhaps the raw sickness he carried with him all the time held him in a state of suspended decay.

Nemesis tried to create more illusions, but I radiated the light of truth to stop her, then threw darkness at Adam, though it was mostly ineffective, partly because I still didn't really know how to control it. I backed up, trying to get to Lucifer, when the window beside me shattered and Belial flew inside—wielding Morningstar. Of course he'd taken it. I should have known. Even so, for a brief fleeting moment I thought he might have come to help, until I saw him go after Callan.

Jophiel ran into the room, her sword held high, as she defended her son with a roar. She traded blows with Belial, until Adam released a wave of the sickness directed solely at her. As it hit her, the color drained from her face, and she wobbled as the sickness stole her ethereal glow—whatever had lit her from within that I hadn't noticed until now. She swayed, moving in slow motion, as her gaze became panicked. She hit the floor and Nemesis was immediately beside her, plucking what looked like a large diamond from her body.

I screamed for Marcus, as the world around me turned to complete chaos. Kassiel and the others who'd been outside rushed in, throwing up their arms to combat the smell of sickness in the air. Bastien immediately

took on Nemesis, using his Ofanim powers to combat her illusions, while Marcus began to heal Jophiel, and Kassiel tried to drag a sickly Olivia out of the room.

Lucifer recovered from Adam's attack first, and he rose to his feet and summoned a sword of shadow in one hand and a ball of hellfire in the other. I gathered darkness and light and stood beside him, preparing to take on Pestilence. If nothing else, we would die together.

We released our magic at him, and though he staggered back from the attack, it wasn't enough. Adam raised a hand and blasted us both with enough power to send us crashing back against the farthest wall.

"I'm a god now." Adam's horrid laughter filled the room. "Nobody can stop me. Not even the mighty Lucifer."

Nemesis grabbed Callan by his blond hair and yanked his head back. Belial moved forward and rested the blade of Morningstar to his neck, where a thin line of blood appeared. "Anybody moves," he said, "And pretty-boy dies."

"No!" Olivia and Jophiel cried at the same time, but Jo's voice was weak and insubstantial. Little more than exhaled air.

"Use the key," Nemesis ground out, her words directed at Callan as he tried to resist her hold. "Or we lay waste to all these people you love."

Callan glared at them as Nemesis pressed the gemstone into his hand. It glowed slightly as soon as he touched it, like it contained a touch of Heaven's light within. "I won't."

Adam grabbed Bastien and infected him with his sickness, making the angel's skin turn a sickly green. "I will keep going. You can watch everyone in the room grow sick and die, until you open the way to Heaven."

"Fine." Callan's teeth were clenched, and we all knew it was far from fine. "But I don't know how you expect me to do this. I've never seen this thing before, let alone used it."

"It will respond to your will." Even Adam's voice was changing, becoming more of a hiss and losing the rich tones it had held before. "The key will recognize you, son of Michael. It knows your bloodline."

Callan took a shaky breath and held the gem out before him. The room filled with an other-worldly light, and a shimmering hole appeared. It shone and sparkled, the colors pearlescent, and it was nearly impossible to tear my eyes off of it.

"You're coming with us." Adam grabbed my arm suddenly, yanking me to my feet. "You're mine. You've always been mine, Eve."

"No!" my sister suddenly yelled. "You will not hurt my family!"

Jophiel spread her beautiful copper wings and launched herself at Adam. She looked so deathly ill I wasn't sure how she even moved, but she managed to knock him back, releasing me from his grasp. In return, he flung his hand out, sending a concentrated stream of sickness just for her. The diseased air twisted around her, making her gasp. Jophiel dropped to the floor, hitting the carpet with a thump and not moving again.

Rage poured through me, giving me strength, and I channeled my light and dark energy, sending out pure waves of it woven together like an intricate braid, aimed straight at Adam. The blast drove him back, but the Elder God inside him fought me.

"Come on already," Nemesis yelled, halfway through the portal. Belial had already disappeared inside it, I saw with a huge wave of sadness and disappointment. "Leave her!"

She still had an iron grip on Callan and dragged him through the portal with her, and Adam cast me one last glare before he followed. The portal closed instantly behind them, leaving the rest of us with no way to follow or fight.

HANNAH



Marcus rushed everyone outside, away from the noxious fumes, and he carried my sister with him. We all stumbled out onto the front lawn, the others coughing and weak, barely able to walk. I grabbed onto Kassiel and helped him regain his footing, needing to be near my son, to make sure he was all right. Once we'd made it to safety, I wrapped my arms around him and gave him a tight hug, relieved he was okay.

I pulled away to see Marcus kneeling beside my sister. He looked up at me, his expression mournful, his eyes glazed.

"No," I whispered. "It can't be. She can't have—" I'd been so pissed at her, so damn angry, but now... She was gone. "Can't you resurrect her? You brought me back!" My words were desperate and thin, like even they held no hope at all. Why hadn't I been born a healer too? Who cared about truth, when the people you loved were dying around you?

Marcus's face crumbled. "I wish I could, but I'll barely have enough energy to heal everyone else as it is. I'm sorry."

Marcus's shoulders slumped, and I staggered backward into Lucifer's waiting arms. He held me close as I sobbed, my grief loud in the shocked silence that filled the air. Marcus moved to Olivia next, healing her from the poison Adam had spread. Everyone had been hit by it, but some had been worse off than others. Kassiel, to my relief, had barely inhaled any of it, and was only coughing a tiny bit. Olivia, on the other hand, had been inside from the beginning and could barely move, and Bastien was in pretty bad shape too.

When Marcus finished with the others and moved to Lucifer, my mate held up a hand. "I'm fine. Save your strength."

Marcus nodded, with shadows like purple bruises beneath his eyes. He'd worn himself out healing everyone. I'd been the only one untouched by Adam's disease—he wasn't ready to kill me yet. He always did like to make me suffer first.

If not for Jophiel's final act of bravery, Adam would have dragged me through the portal with them too. I could only imagine what torment he'd had planned for me in Heaven. I only wished we'd been able to stop them from taking Callan too.

"She sacrificed herself for me," I whispered. "She did horrible things, was so..." I stopped and searched for the right word. "*Misguided* at times, but she did bad things for the right reasons." I looked at Lucifer and begged him to understand, although I couldn't speak those words.

His hand curled around mine. "That I will agree with. She did everything she did out of love."

Another sob escaped me. "I never got to make peace with her for what she did, and now it's too late." I would have forgiven her eventually, just as I forgave Lucifer. It wasn't in my heart to hold grudges for too long—except when it came to Adam. That fucker was going to pay. Someday. Somehow.

Olivia sat on the grass against Kassiel, curled up in his lap, with Marcus and Bastien on either side, their hands resting against her. They were all upset, worried about Callan, and occasional tears slid down Olivia's cheeks. I was worried too—he was my nephew, and Jophiel's son, and I owed it to her to rescue him.

"They won't kill him," Lucifer said, stroking my back. "They need Callan to open War's tomb. Even afterward, I doubt they will. He's Michael's only living son. He was born in Heaven and they'll keep him alive in case they need his blood again."

Olivia looked at Lucifer hopefully. "Are you sure?"

He nodded. "Try not to worry. He's strong."

"Yeah, but Adam is too powerful," Marcus muttered. "How can we possibly defeat him?"

"Once War is released, it will be too late to stop the apocalypse," Bastien said. "And now they have the means to do it."

"The best we could do is get Pestilence out of his body and entomb his essence like they did last time," Kassiel said.

Lucifer pinched his brow. "We'd need to get the fae on our side for that. Unfortunately, the High King and I don't get along much these days."

Kassiel arched an eyebrow. "You made peace with the angels, surely we can convince the fae to work with us on this."

They continued discussing this but I tuned them out, staring at my sister's sickly pale skin. My stomach suddenly lurched and I turned away, hoping it would pass. It didn't, and I rushed away from the group, around the corner of the house. I pressed my hand to my mouth, my stomach roiling and trying to reject its contents, and I found a bush to duck behind.

I quickly hurled up all the food I'd had on the airplane. Tears gathered in my eyes as they always did when I was sick, and I wiped them away as my stomach moved again. I waited, gagging on nothing, but although my muscles moved, nothing else emerged. Sweat beaded on my forehead from the effort, and I leaned back against the wall behind me.

Shit. This really wasn't the time to develop a weak stomach.

"Are you all right?" Lucifer asked, concern written across his face.

"No," I said, wiping my mouth. "I just watched my sister be killed by the first Horseman of the apocalypse. I'm definitely not all right."

"I understand." He waited for me to join him, and I took his arm, leaning on him more than I wanted to as we walked back to the others. "The horrors of Pestilence's powers must have gotten to you. I've seen it happen before."

I nodded slowly and he dropped a kiss to the top of my head. I still felt a bit sick, and the shaky, fragile feeling hadn't left me, but I attempted to look stronger than I felt as we rejoined the rest of the group.

Lucifer stood at my side, his hand on my shoulder, as he surveyed the others. "It's time to go."

"Go?" Marcus asked. "Where? We can't get into Heaven."

"We can't stay here and wait for other demons to come and pick us off," Lucifer said, his voice commanding. "We'll head to Las Vegas, gather our allies, form a new plan, and then go after Pestilence."

Olivia sniffled and stood. "Let's go figure out how to rescue Callan."

Their group shuffled toward the limo, but I couldn't move from the spot where I stood. Not without Jophiel. "We can't just leave her here."

“I’ll have someone come take care of her body,” Lucifer said as he took my hand. “I’ll handle everything. I swear it. Just come with me now.”

I nodded and looked down at my sister as I wiped away fresh tears. My son had helped do this, while her son had tried to defend us, and now they were both lost to us. While there was still a chance of rescuing Callan, I was starting to think I’d never get my eldest son back. Maybe Lucifer was right, and there were no more chances for Belial.

Maybe Belial was lost to us forever.

I barely noticed as Lucifer herded me into the limo and we drove away. I barely noticed as we got back on the private jet and took off. I barely noticed when we landed in Las Vegas sometime later. I was numb. Going through the motions, but empty inside. Trying to find any small sliver of hope—and failing.

LUCIFER



I looked out of the penthouse window, seeing myself reflected in the glass, my whiskey in my hand. Behind me, Hannah paced back and forth, her arms crossed, her body language turned inward. Olivia and three of her mates reclined on the leather sofa, with Kassiel, Bastien, and Marcus sitting so close to her they should have been crowding her, but she seemed to need them all. Maybe she did—she was part succubus, after all.

I took a deep breath before turning to face the room. What a disaster today had become. I'd already summoned Samael and Azazel home, and they were on their way back from Penumbra Prison, where they'd learned absolutely nothing. I'd taken care of everything at Jophiel's house, sending her body off to the angels. I'd called Archangel Gabriel and asked him to meet me here to discuss our next steps. My head buzzed with my long list of things to do, but I was working through them and everyone in the room had a glass of wine, so at least there was that.

Hannah was the thing I worried about most though. She'd barely said a word since we'd left Jophiel's house. She'd been ill again on the airplane, but she'd refused to let Marcus heal her, saying she was fine. I'd tried to convince her to go to bed and get some rest, so she could mourn in private, but she'd said she wanted to be here when Gabriel arrived.

I checked my watch, wondering where he was. As if conjured by my thoughts of him, the Archangel appeared in front of me, and I steeled against a flinch, fighting not to react. The King of Hell was never taken by surprise. But fuck, I really hated when he did that.

“Where’s my daughter?” the sandy-haired Archangel said by way of a greeting.

I understood. I’d be concerned only for Kassiel if I were in his position. I nodded over his shoulder, and he turned around, his arms already outstretched.

Olivia jumped to her feet as soon as saw him. “Father,” she cried and ran to him.

He caught her and pressed her to him, and my heart gave a tug for the daughter I’d never experience this love with. I shoved that grief down, knowing I couldn’t deal with it now.

Gabriel wrapped his arm around his daughter and led her to the black leather sofa before Kassiel explained in greater detail everything that had happened over the last few days, picking up all of the things I’d left out of my quick, urgent communication.

Gabriel sighed heavily when the tale was finished. “You’ve really gotten yourself into a mess this time, haven’t you, Lucifer?”

“I refuse to take credit for this one.” I poured Gabriel a stiff drink. It always amused me to see angels drinking. Humans thought they were so pure. Oh, if only they knew the truth.

Gabriel frowned as he took the drink. “The loss of Jophiel is a heavy blow to the angel community. She was not only one of our Archangels, but also the CEO of Aether Industries, our largest employer.”

“Her son was taken by Adam,” Hannah said in a quiet voice. “We need to honor her memory by rescuing him.”

Gabriel’s eyes landed on her. “Haniel. I thought you were lost to us. It’s been so long since I saw you.”

“I was lost, in a way,” she replied. “But not anymore.”

“She’s right, we need to find Callan,” Olivia said. “Do you have a key to Heaven?”

Gabriel swirled his drink around, the ice clinking against the sides. “Yes, Michael entrusted me with one when he sealed off Heaven.”

I nodded, his words confirming my suspicions. I’d done the same thing when I’d closed Hell. Lilith had my backup key—she was the only Archdemon I trusted. Well, more than the rest, anyway. What was trust really, besides a short list of people less likely to stab me in the back on any given day? A list that grew shorter by the hour.

"Shouldn't we already be on our way there?" Kassiel asked. "Every moment we delay they get closer to War's tomb."

"We can't rush into this," I said. "Our failure at Jophiel's house showed us that much. We need to gather our allies and formulate a plan."

Gabriel nodded. "If they're traveling through the ruined, abandoned landscape of Heaven, it will take them some time."

I finished my whiskey and set it down on the bar. "Yes, they can't exactly hop on a plane over there. We'll take the jet to the equivalent location of the tomb here on Earth, and then use the key to open the portal. That way, we might even surprise them."

"What's the plan once we get there?" Hannah asked.

I steepled my fingers as I considered. "The priority is to stop them from releasing War. If they do manage to free him, we need to make sure he doesn't possess anyone. There's a small chance we might be able to re-seal him in the tomb, but not if he's taken a new vessel."

"Pestilence required a sacrifice," Bastien said. "Will War ask for the same?"

"I believe so, yes," I said.

"What about Pestilence?" Marcus asked. He still looked haunted after the healing he'd done earlier. I can only imagine how anathema Pestilence would be to a Malakim like himself, whose duty was to preserve life.

I spread my hands. "The best we can do for now is to distract him and possibly kill Adam's body. Once we stop the threat of War, we can contact the fae and work with them to trap Pestilence again."

"I need to make some calls." Gabriel finished off his drink and rose to his feet. "The tomb is in the equivalent of Mexico, just outside Cancun at Chichen Itza. I can teleport there myself, but I can't take everyone with me."

I nodded. "The rest of us will take the jet first thing in the morning."

"I'll organize some angels to help. This is a threat we must all stand against." Gabriel turned to Olivia. "I'll see you soon."

He disappeared in the blink of an eye. One second there, the next gone—his Archangel power. He'd always been my favorite Archangel, but damn, that was annoying.

The others all stood too. "We'll see you in the morning," Kassiel said, giving Hannah's arm a quick squeeze before he left.

After they retreated to their own guest suites in the hotel, I sent a message to Raphael to let him know what we had planned. We'd need the help of the strongest Malakim to combat Adam's plague powers. Frankly, we needed all the allies we could get at this point if we were going to stand against Pestilence.

"Go on to bed," I told Hannah. "I'll be right there after I send a few more messages."

She nodded and left the room, and I called Einial and went over some of the logistical aspects of our journey tomorrow. Once that was done, I considered contacting the fae, but there was no time. I couldn't exactly text them over in Faerie, after all. The fae were not exactly up to date on current technology.

As I walked across the living room, movement outside the window caught my eye. I was instantly alert, ready for another attack, when I spotted a female gargoyle hovering outside. She had black hair tied back in a bun, and she spread her leathery, taloned wings and set down on the balcony outside.

As I walked closer, I recognized her as Romana, Belphegor's eldest daughter. Great. Just what I needed right now was another headstrong child seeking revenge for the death of their parent. A death I had nothing to do with this time.

I threw open the sliding door. "What are you doing here?"

"Is it true?" she asked, with a slight French accent. "Is she dead?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Tell me."

I gestured for her to sit on one of the lounge chairs on the patio, as the night breeze teased at our hair and clothes. She perched on the edge of her seat, like she was a bundle of nerves that were ready to launch herself off the chair at any moment.

I sat across from her and quickly laid out what had happened, including Adam's betrayal and murder of Belphegor. The whole sordid tale. I wasn't sure how much Belphegor had involved her daughter in her plots against me, but Romana didn't seem surprised by much of what I told her—except for the end, when Pestilence emerged and Adam sacrificed Belphegor for the power.

Romana seethed, her hands gripping the side of the chair, her skin turning to stone. "I will kill him myself for what he's done."

I nearly laughed at the idea that she could succeed where I had failed. However, we needed allies if we were going to defeat this threat, and I was never one to pass up an opportunity. Even though the gargoyles had tried to kill Hannah while Belphegor led them, I sensed a chance to give them a new beginning.

"You are the new Archdemon of the gargoyles," I told her. "I need to know now—will you stand against me? Or against the people who betrayed your mother?"

She considered for a moment, and I saw the thoughtfulness in her brown eyes, before she bowed her head. "I stand with you, my lord."

I rose to my feet. "A wise choice. Tomorrow we fly to Mexico to stop Adam and the others from releasing War. You and your gargoyles would be very useful in that fight."

"We will join you. I will have revenge for my mother's death." She slowly dropped to her knees before me, her eyes lowered. "I pledge my loyalty to you, Lucifer. I will serve you as your Archdemon."

That was unexpected, but certainly welcome. I gestured for her to stand. "Rise, Romana. I thank you for your oath. We leave first thing in the morning."

"We will be ready." Her wings snapped out and she disappeared off the side of the balcony, into the night air.

I gazed out at the Las Vegas lights, trying to calm the turmoil in my head at the thought of what we would face tomorrow, but there was only one person who could soothe me. When I walked into my bedroom, Hannah was curled up in a ball under the covers in the middle of the bed. I undressed quickly and climbed under the blankets behind her, wrapping my arms around her.

"I never got to forgive her," she whispered.

"I'm sorry." There wasn't much else to say. No words would help her pain. I was all too familiar with loss, as were all immortals, and I knew it never got any easier.

"I was mad at her, but I didn't want her to die."

"She knew. She knew the moment you told her you loved her."

"Do you think so?"

I wanted to erase all uncertainty and guilt from her. Her immortal life would be a long time to bear that weight. Assuming we survived the next

fight. "I'm sure of it. She loved you too. That's why she sacrificed herself to save you. That's why she did everything."

Hannah sighed. "I know. Her love was...overbearing. But it was true."

My arms tightened around her. "We're going to stop Adam, I swear it."

"How?" She let out a sad laugh. "Elder Gods can't be killed."

I didn't have the answer, but I had an idea. A possibility. The only thing as powerful as an Elder God...was another Elder God.

Could we get War to defeat Pestilence?

HANNAH



Cancun was warm and sunny, and all of the things the travel websites promised, yet still perfectly miserable. My sister was dead, my nephew taken, my son lost. Everything was wrong. As someone who was grieving, it was like a slap in the face that the day was so gorgeous. It should've been raining and bleak. Everything needed to be gray. Like I was.

But as we stepped off the jet and the sunshine beat down on my face, I at least felt a little stronger physically. As an angel, that warmth and sunlight helped, as did the ocean breeze blowing against my skin. I turned my head toward the bright sun, hoping it would burn through all the darkness inside me.

Lucifer rested his hand on the small of my back as he breathed in deeply. "We'll have to return someday. When things calm down."

I nodded, though we both knew it would be a miracle if we survived the day. Besides, all I cared about was defeating Adam. For thousands of years he had tortured and killed me. He'd tormented and tricked my family. He'd murdered my daughter and now my sister. I was ready to make him pay.

Our private jet had been packed with our allies, and they spilled out onto the tarmac now. Numerous black SUVs waited to drive us to the location of the tomb, and I hurried toward the first one. I didn't want to waste any more time. The few hours of rest we'd gotten were needed, but not at the expense of preventing Adam from releasing War.

"How long is the drive?" I asked, as I piled into a car with Einial and Lucifer.

"Two hours," Einial said. "Roughly."

"Others will be meeting us there," Lucifer said. "Assuming Gabriel and Raphael came through."

"They will," I said. Gabriel had only spoken truth last night. The question was whether his additional angels would be enough. Without some protection against Adam, I didn't see how we'd even be able to fight him, but we had to try. There was no other way. I'd never been content to just roll over before, and now that I had Lucifer back and the promise of forever with him, I wasn't about to roll over now. I reached for Lucifer's hand and entwined my fingers with his. No, I wasn't ready to give this up.

The car fell silent as we drove, and I assumed all of us were contemplating the coming fight. We left the airport and drove over a bridge, then headed through Cancun, which reminded me a lot of Southern California—big blue skies dotted with wispy clouds, palm trees on either side of the road, white buildings with signs in Spanish.

I spotted a glimpse of the ocean between the buildings, and I lowered my window to get a bit of the fresh sea air. We rolled to a stop outside a restaurant, and I was hit with the strong smell of seafood. Normally, I loved seafood, but today the thought of it turned my stomach. I gripped the edge of the leather seat and gritted my jaw against the sudden and strong wave of intense nausea.

A memory rose up from about forty years ago, when I'd been pregnant with my daughter, and a similar smell had sent me running to the bathroom. None of my other pregnancies had caused nausea, but I'd been ready to hurl for pretty much the whole time with my last one.

A particularly gnarly wave of nausea hit me when the wind brought more of the fish stink into the car. I quickly raised the window and clutched the seat with white-knuckled hands, fighting to keep my breakfast. I'd gotten sick yesterday, too, but I'd thought it was a reaction to Pestilence and everything we'd just been through. But what if it wasn't?

Fuck. Shit. Fuck. Could I be pregnant?

"Are you okay?" Lucifer asked, watching me with a worried twist to his mouth.

I nodded and grabbed a bottle of water. As I sipped it, my stomach settled a little, but the movement of the car from the backseat made me

feel sick again. I wanted to yell at my body to get it together. This was so not the time.

"Hungry?" Lucifer asked, then turned to Einial. "Do we have anything to eat?"

"Yes, of course." She opened up a backpack full of an assortment of savory and sweet snacks.

I nearly gagged but stopped myself in time as I shook my head. Then I spied a pack of plain crackers and snatched them before Einial closed it up again. "Thanks," I muttered. "Just feeling all this stress, I guess."

Lucifer squeezed my leg as I opened the crackers. I nibbled them slowly, trying hard not to think about the whole eating thing. Just auto-pilot chew, chew, chew, swallow. Holy crap. A baby would be an insane complication. Huge. At the worst possible time in my life. But I couldn't keep my hand from drifting towards my stomach. An insane complication, but also *ours*.

As we left the city and drove along a highway flanked by thick greenery, I pushed the nausea to the back of my mind. It was nearly gone now, and really might've just been lingering effects from Pestilence's power. A baby, no matter how incredible it would be, just wasn't an option during this fight. Just to be safe, I'd take a pregnancy test as soon as this was over though.

"Where is everyone?" I asked as we pulled up in front of the old ruins of the ancient city of Chichen Itza. I wasn't sure if I'd ever been here before, but it was obvious there should've been tourists everywhere. Yet nobody was waiting at the base of the long Mayan staircase or taking pictures of the ancient structures. "This place should be packed."

"I pulled some strings." Lucifer made his influence sound like child's play, but even now his reach still had the power to amaze me. "We have the site to ourselves today."

We parked the cars and got out, and I glanced around, taking it all in. There was a huge, flat, open area where the city had once stood, and thick greenery surrounded it on all sides, making this the perfect place to gather our allies and prepare for battle. The immense pyramid stood out in the distance, but there were other structures too, including an area with hundreds of stone columns lined up in rows. My love of history and mythology made me wish I could spend the day here like a tourist, learning everything about it.

"That used to be a market," Lucifer said, nodding toward the rows of pillars. "This city was truly spectacular long ago."

We approached the pyramid as everyone else got out of the cars and began to follow us. It was huge, with tens of thousands of limestone blocks, and the stones seemed to glow with an ethereal light as the sun sank in the horizon. I stared at the steep steps, and noticed serpent heads at the base. It was magnificent, and this close to it I felt a low thrum of power, like a subtle vibration in the air around me.

"You feel it, don't you?" Lucifer asked, watching me closely.

I nodded. "What is it? I felt the same thing at Stonehenge."

"This pyramid exists in multiple realms," Lucifer said. "As do many other old structures that humans consider wonders of the world. Like Stonehenge or the Tower of Jericho. The Great Pyramid of Giza. The World's Biggest Ball of Twine."

"Twine?" I asked.

He shrugged. "The imps."

Ah. That explained it.

He ran his fingers along one of the ancient stones. "In the old days, these locations acted as bridges between the realms, and they were ruled by angels, demons, or fae. Back when the humans worshipped us as gods."

The sun lowered behind the pyramid, bathing the world in a rainbow of reds and oranges, while we walked back toward the large, flat area of grass. Others had begun to gather in large numbers. Olivia and her mates, of course. Samael and Azazel and other loyal Fallen. Our surprise allies the gargoyles, led by their new Archdemon, Romana. Plus a large contingent of angels, including a group of Malakim healers that Archangel Raphael had brought.

Archangel Gabriel stood among them. He was a handsome man with sand-colored hair and a welcoming face, the rare angel who looked more like a human than an immortal. We'd met multiple times back when I was Haniel, and I'd always liked him. I'd known Raphael a bit too, although more by reputation than anything—he was a huge flirt with dozens of children, all from different women over the years. He was also ridiculously handsome and charming, with shiny dark locks, olive skin, and a captivating smile.

Everyone was busy preparing for battle, wielding weapons and wearing armor, while their leaders barked out orders. I felt completely

underdressed, wearing something akin to my workout gear, and Lucifer had on one of his signature black suits. Armor wouldn't protect us from Pestilence's powers anyway. Better to be comfortable and able to move around with ease, I figured.

While Lucifer conferred with Einial, I gazed across our impressive force, made up of both angels and demons—people who I'd never expect to fight side-by-side. An impending apocalypse brought together strange allies indeed.

I walked over to Kassiel, my heart aching at the sight of him in his sleek, black battle gear. One son, going to fight another. We hugged each other tight, knowing this might be the end for one or both of us, and I prayed to whatever god might be listening to protect him.

"Do you think we can save him?" Kassiel asked, and I knew he was speaking of his brother.

"I don't know, but I won't stop trying." I took Kassiel's face in my hands and looked upon him, my heart overflowing with love, and then kissed him on the forehead. "I love you. Be safe out there."

"Love you too, Mom."

He had a few quiet words with Lucifer next, while Zel came over and wrapped an arm around my shoulder. "Remember everything I taught you and you'll be fine," she said.

I hugged her close. "Don't die out there. I need you to watch my back."

She huffed as she hugged me back. "As if anything could stop me from doing that."

All around us people said what could be their final words to those they loved. Everyone here knew this was a battle many of us would not walk away from. If any of us did.

Lucifer turned toward Gabriel, "Are we ready?"

"Yes, we're all set." Gabriel pulled out his own key, a clear gem about the size of his palm and already glowing faintly. But then he paused and an expression that looked almost sad came over his face.

"What is it?" I asked.

Gabriel drew in a long breath as he stared at the gem. "I haven't been to Heaven in over thirty years. Some of the angels here have never even seen it."

Lucifer rested a hand on his shoulder. "I know exactly how you feel."

Gabriel shook himself out of his thoughts, then held the gem out in front of him. Bright light burst out of it, opening a huge, shimmering portal to another world. My breath caught at the sight of it, and the idea that Heaven was on the other side.

Angels and demons alike began to stream into the portal, vanishing as soon as they stepped inside. I longed to follow them, and yet I was apprehensive about it too. What waited for us on the other side?

Lucifer turned to me and met my eyes, silently asking if I was ready. I nodded at him and took his hand. We stood together, ready to face whatever was on the other side of that portal.

Then we stepped through.

HANNAH



As soon as we were on the other side, my powers heightened, and the boost soothed my soul. Coming home—there was nothing else like it. Breathing deep, I closed my eyes and soaked in the warm light and influx of energy from simply being in this realm. It was truly Heaven. Pun intended.

Every angel that had been here before had a look on their faces like they'd come home at last, while the younger angels were completely awestruck at visiting Heaven for the first time. Meanwhile, the demons squinted and grumbled, their powers diminished in the land of light.

The sky was that deep coral color that I remembered being the closest Heaven ever got to night. Here, the sun met the horizon, but never went any lower. It sank and the light dimmed, but it never went out. I could only imagine what it would feel like during the middle of the day with the sun high in the sky.

Beside me, Lucifer's grip on my hand tightened as he looked up at the sky. Unlike other demons, he could also feed on light, a remnant of when he was an angel. I wondered when he had last been here.

"How does it feel being back?" I asked.

He dropped his eyes to me, his expression bittersweet. "Like being both home and homesick, all at the same time."

Somehow I knew what he meant, because even though this body had been born here, it wasn't truly home anymore, any more than Hell or Faerie was. Home was Earth.

No. Home was wherever Lucifer was.

Our fighters took to the sky, spreading wings of white, black, and every shade in between. We flew toward the pyramid, which was just a pile of crumbled ruins here in Heaven, unlike on Earth. A sad result of the war. There were so many things that were gone or destroyed in this realm, casualties of the horrible fighting between Heaven and Hell that had lasted for thousands of years. I was sure Hell looked much the same.

As we approached in the sky, I saw a large group standing in the ruins of the pyramid below, and a great gaping hole in the center of it. A tomb had been pulled out of it, and Callan stood beside it, flanked by Belial and Nemesis. Nemesis sliced Callan's hand, and his blood sprayed across the black tomb, making the symbols on it glow.

"No!" I yelled, knowing we were too late.

War erupted from the tomb with a huge roar, sending out a blast of energy that knocked everyone back, including those of us in the air. He rose up like a red cloud of fury, his spirit radiating anger and hatred, as he grew so huge he blocked the last sliver of sun that rested on the far-off horizon.

"Stick to the plan," Gabriel called out, as we all reeled from the shock of seeing him already freed.

The plan. Right. Distract Pestilence. Get War back in his tomb. We could do this. We had to. Or this would be the end for all of us.

Our forces slowly recovered and flew toward the pyramid ruins. Toward two of the Four Horsemen of the apocalypse. Our group was led by some of the Malakim healers, who created an aura of healing magic to block his powers. Pestilence flew in front of us on sickly gray wings, and below him was the green-haired fae Philomelus, along with a black wolf about the size of a truck. Fenrir, my memories supplied—Archdemon of shifters. There was also an assortment of imps and shifters around the ruins too, and they began to fight with our varied group of allies.

Chaos broke out as magic and weapons clashed, but then Adam released his magic, and it quickly burned through the healing wall the Malakim had put up, forcing us to retreat. There was no way we could get closer or stop War with Pestilence's magic blocking us, making us sick and weak.

Adam lifted his hand, a manic grin creasing his swollen and pus-filled face as he prepared to unleash a wave of sickness upon us that would

probably end the battle. But then Callan stood up from beside the tomb, clutching his side as if in pain, and launched into the air.

“Callan!” Olivia screamed as he flew forward and knocked into Adam, knocking him back. But my nephew was too late. A rush of Pestilence’s power vaulted toward us.

Then a wall of pure, strong light appeared out of nowhere, blocking Adam with a magical shield. Callan held up a hand as he flew in the air near Pestilence, keeping the monster's sickness contained.

Damn. He really was strong. Heightened by the light and power here in Heaven, Callan’s shield held steady against every onslaught Adam sent our way, allowing us to press forward. Olivia and her mates, along with a small group of gargoyles, quickly surrounded Callan, protecting him so he could keep us shielded. I spotted Kassiel among them, and I was hit with a wave of pride and fear, but knew he was capable of defending himself. It was his brother I needed to worry about.

There were so many of us that our sheer number would’ve overwhelmed any other enemy in any battle, but Adam continued to sicken anyone who pressed through Callan’s protective shield to attack. Adam slowed under the constant barrage of the attack, but wouldn't fall. Philomelus helped him by throwing huge stones and other parts of the ruins at our forces, but Samael and Azazel swooped down to stop him.

Lucifer and I battled our way through the chaos, his hellfire and darkness taking out anyone who dared stand against him. I used everything I'd learned over the past few weeks about light and darkness to fight alongside him, as we flew to the center of the ruins, where Belial stood with Nemesis.

Before Lucifer and I could reach our son, Fenrir suddenly leaped into the air and smacked us both with his clawed paws. I managed to twist and roll, flapping my silver wings rapidly, but Lucifer recovered faster. He shot hellfire at Fenrir, who fought it off with something like lava bursting out of his fanged mouth. I blasted Fenrir with blinding white light, making him stumble back and shake his head, while Lucifer chained him with darkness. Fenrir burst free of the shadow bonds with a great shake and a roar that shook the earth, and I wished more than anything that I had Morningstar.

Maybe I could improvise. I created two huge daggers made of shadow, a trick I remembered from my years as Lenore, and then wove light around

them. While Fenrir tried to snap at Lucifer's wings, I launched myself onto his large back, settling into the thick fur. Then I stabbed each blade into his shoulders, making him scream and rear back. Just enough for Lucifer to hit him with a direct shot of hellfire.

Fenrir bucked me off him and I went flying, but Lucifer caught me in his arms. When I looked back, Fenrir had shrunk to a normal size wolf, and he stumbled into his group of shifters and disappeared amongst them. Turning tail and running away.

"Nice thinking," Lucifer said, nodding to my twin blades. "Now let's put War back where he belongs."

The path had cleared before us, and we flew as quickly as we could. War's enormous, rageful spirit hovered mid-air over his tomb, his burning red eyes watching Nemesis and Belial below.

"This Horseman is mine," Nemesis yelled, shoving my son back, her sharp black nails extended for battle.

"You can't handle that kind of power," Belial snapped. He held Morningstar in his hands and it glowed with bright white light. His wings were out, and they were beautiful—black at the top, then fading to gray, then white at the bottom.

"And you can't make the required sacrifice." Nemesis laughed, the sound cruel. "Or did you forget what happened at Stonehenge?"

War's horrid laughter filled the air. "Yes, fight little ones. Your anger and hatred only make me stronger. Fight to the death, and I will claim the victor as my prize."

The closer I got to War, the angrier I felt, but I was able to shake it off, my Ofanim senses allowing me to feel the emotion as a lie. I landed beside Belial, hoping to reason with my son. I didn't know if I'd get this opportunity again.

Before I could try anything, Belial slashed Nemesis with Morningstar and roared. As she hit the ground, the look in his eyes terrified me. My son had been inflicted with War's madness. There wasn't anything I could do. Not with him in this berserker state.

But I had to try.

I cast the light of truth on him, hoping to free him from War's grasp. "Belial, stop!"

"War is mine." He turned toward me, his eyes seeing me a little clearer, thanks to my magic. "It's the only way."

"Please don't do this!" I ran forward, making it halfway to him before Lucifer stopped me by grabbing me around the waist and hauling me back.

"Hannah, no!"

"Let me go! We can't let him become a monster!" I fought Lucifer off, desperate to get to my son, but his grip held tight. If Belial became War, we'd either have to kill him, lock him away...or watch as he destroyed everything we loved. "Belial!"

"I won't let that happen to him," Lucifer said in a voice so confident it made me stop struggling. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes," I said, without hesitation. Despite his harsh words before, he loved our son. He'd do whatever he could to protect him.

He glanced quickly at Belial, who was approaching War, then looked back at me. "I don't have time to explain, but I think I can stop this and save our son. Maybe take out Adam at the same time. But you're not going to like it."

"Do it," I said, even as my heart broke at his words. "Whatever it takes."

Lucifer nodded grimly. "Whatever it takes."

"I love you," I said, fearing it might be the last time I ever had a chance to say those words to him.

"I love you too." He pulled me close and pressed a hard, passionate kiss to my lips. "With all my heart."

A huge piece of stone suddenly came crashing down beside us. Philomelus approached us, no doubt trying to stop us from interfering with Belial and War. "Go," I said, pushing back from Lucifer. "I'll take care of this. Just save our son."

"I will." He gave me one last lingering look, before spreading his shadowy wings and launching toward War and Belial.

I held my breath and fought back the fear and worry for two of the men I loved most, before turning to defend them from another threat.

LUCIFER



I landed hard in front of Belial, blocking him from War. “Stop!”
“Get out of the way,” Belial yelled.

He'd been arguing with War over the required sacrifice as I approached, still unable to take the life of one he loved. I saw it as a sign that there was still some small goodness left in my son's heart. If War got a hold of him, that tiny shred of light would be snuffed out forever. I couldn't let that happen—even if it meant sacrificing myself to save him. And if I got control of War, I might be able to defeat Pestilence at the same time. I had to try, anyway.

“Take me.” My command boomed forcefully across Heaven, loud enough that War paused. “I’m far more powerful than my son in every way.”

“Are you?” War asked, his voice cracking the air like thunder.

I stood taller, spreading darkness around me like a cloak. “Need I count the ways? I’m older and stronger. I have more magic. I'm the king of all demons. You'll never find a better vessel.”

“You...” War's spectral form glared down at me with malice. “Son of Death. You were one of my captors.”

Shit. I should have known he'd recognize me. But I could turn this around. “That's right. I defeated you before, but now I'm offering you a chance to take me as your vessel instead. There's no one stronger than me, and you know it. I fought against you in the Elder War, and I fought against angels in the Great War. Now I'll fight *with* you.”

"You also ended the Great War," Belial growled, then looked over at War. "He's grown weak in his old age. He fights for peace now."

War fixed his vile gaze on my son again. "Hmm. I sense you are good at sowing conflict. You *are* enemies with your own father, after all."

"No!" I flew forward. I couldn't let him take my son. I'd seen what it had done to Adam. No matter what had happened in the past, I would never consider Belial my enemy. Not even after he'd betrayed me so many times. Not even after this. Here. Now. He was my son. And I would do whatever it took to save him—as I'd promised Hannah. Even if it meant sacrificing myself. "Belial is weak. He's stood against me numerous times, and I've always defeated him. He's the biggest disappointment of my life."

"Then sacrifice him," War said. "And you will have my power."

Despite my hard words, even I couldn't do that. "No. There must be another sacrifice you will accept."

"Yes. The angel woman." War stretched out a long finger toward Hannah, where she fought against the fae man. "Your mate."

I clenched my hands at my sides. "I will not take her life."

"Ah, but the sacrifice I require is one of the mind." War leaned close, surrounding me with his spectral energy. "She will live, but I will take her from you. Choose now, or I offer the boy the same deal. We both know he will take it."

I looked up at him, fearing what he meant, but knowing I was running out of time. This was probably the best deal I would get, even if my heart wrenched at the thought of losing Hannah in any way. All I could do was pray she would be able to save me from what I was about to do to myself. "Swear she will be unharmed, and I will agree."

"Father, no!" Belial yelled, rushing toward me with Morningstar.

"I swear it," War's voice boomed. "I accept you as my vessel."

At his words, War slammed into me with a rush of power, chaos, and hatred. I felt like my body was ripped apart only to sew itself back together, then torn apart all over again. Every pore oozed pain and torment. A needle for every day I'd ever lived stabbed into me—and I'd lived for so many years. The agony felt like it lasted for hours or days, maybe even weeks. My knees hit the ground, overwhelmed by the fight to remain myself amongst all this overwhelming rage. It had only been seconds, but the anger inside me had built for centuries. And now it was free.

Something inside me had been stripped. Something important, but what was it? The idea that an integral part of me had disappeared bothered me greatly. I couldn't quite put my finger on it. On that one thing I needed to remember. Was something missing?

No matter. I was Lucifer and War and a *god*. Purpose and power filled me as I gazed across the battlefield at the angels and demons still fighting each other. As they should be.

I spread my hands and laughed, using my magic to stir their emotions. I tweaked that part of their minds that allowed the puny creatures to give in to their base instincts. Their primal sides. Their rage.

They turned on each other and fought harder, not knowing or caring who fell before them. And they died, one after another, fueling my power. Making me whole.

Give them anger.

Give them War.

HANNAH



I blasted Philomelus with a combined hit of darkness and light, sending him flying back hundreds of feet. Azazel swooped down where he landed, her blades glowing, and I gave her a quick salute before turning back to help Lucifer.

But I was too late.

“No!” I screamed, as War surged into Lucifer, his angry essence surrounding him and sinking through every pore. Lucifer spread his arms as he accepted it, and understanding crashed over me as my heart shattered into a thousand tiny glass shards. He'd done it to save our son from such a fate—but now he'd cursed himself in the process, and the thought of losing him was unbearable. Maybe he could fight it. There was no one stronger than Lucifer. If anyone could control War, it was him.

Paths of angry red and orange light broke through Lucifer's skin, like it couldn't be contained. It burst out of his body like molten lava seeping through cracks in the ground, pulsing with iridescent fury. He spread his wings wide, and they glowed red instead of their usual inky darkness. Black feathers lit by rage.

Furious and overwhelming power pulsed from Lucifer, filling everyone on the field. As the energy hit all of those waging war against each other, they let out shrieks and cries filled with mindless anger, and began slashing and hacking at whoever was in front of them. Friend or foe, it mattered not. Rage had taken hold of them, and they fought with renewed vigor. If Pestilence weakened and sickened them, War did the opposite. He was a shot of caffeine straight to their anger centers.

And I was the only one who could stop it.

I launched into the air and flew in the lighted dusk to Lucifer, hovering in front of him. My mate was in there somewhere, no doubt fighting against the Elder God that had taken his body, and I had to reach him somehow. It was my only hope of ending this madness and turning him upon Adam.

"Lucifer, stop this!" I touched his arm and squeezed, willing our connection to help him focus past the influence of the god he'd welcomed into his body. "Listen to me! You have to fight it!"

He turned his head toward me with eyes that burned red like hot coal and gave me a scathing look. "Who are you?"

I blinked at him, confused. "It's me, Hannah. Your mate. You...you don't recognize me?"

Lucifer's impossibly handsome face was marred with hatred as he shoved me back. "I'd never mate with an *angel*."

I caught myself with my wings, even as his words shook me deep to my core. This was bad. What had War done to him? "I know you're in there." The words fell from my lips, a desperate attempt to have him acknowledge me. "Lucifer, you have to push through this!"

"Of course I'm in here. I once made the mistake of ending the war against the angels, but War has reminded me who I really am." He sneered at me as he spoke, while the battle raged around us. "It's time to take over Heaven and reopen Hell. Then we'll conquer Earth, and Faerie too." He surveyed the scene of chaos in front of him with satisfaction. "Soon every realm will kneel before me. Their king. Their *god*."

No, I refused to let him become this monster. I would make him remember somehow. I gripped his shoulders, forcing him to look at me. "Lucifer! You are not War! I know you can fight this. You know who I am. I'm Hannah. I'm *Eve*! You are my mate. And you love me." The wind whipped my last words away. "I know you do, even if War's made you forget."

Lucifer's furious red eyes burned brighter, and he grasped my wrist tightly but didn't strike me down. I stared back at him, searching his face for any hint of the man I loved.

"Mother!" Belial grabbed my arm and yanked me back. "There's nothing you can do. He doesn't remember you."

"No!" I cried. My soul felt like it was being torn in two as Belial dragged me away. I'd just gotten Lucifer back, just remembered everything about our past together, and now I'd lost him again. Even though we were no longer cursed, fate seemed to want to keep us apart, to make us suffer for the chance to be together.

But maybe there was hope. Lucifer let us go. He could've killed me easily while I'd pleaded with him, but he hadn't. More than that, the anger that affected everyone else had managed to spare me and Belial. No matter what Lucifer said, there was a part of him that wouldn't hurt me. That knew me, deep down, in the dark depths of his soul. Just like when Jophiel had made him forget Haniel, but he'd ended the war with the angels anyway. No matter what happened, I would always be with him.

As Belial pulled me to safety, I gazed out across the pyramid's ruins and watched the battle going on around us. Angels and demons, who were previously on the same side, now fighting each other because of Lucifer's magic. *War's* magic.

Too many people were injured or dead, and Lucifer wasn't going to stop here. War wouldn't ever let him stop, and even Lucifer wasn't strong enough to fight the Elder God's influence. Now Lucifer would go to Earth and restart the war against angels, and then he'd keep going until War conquered all. When he was finished, what would even be left?

I couldn't let that happen.

Lucifer had saved our son, but in doing so, he'd lost himself. It only made me love him even more, because it was exactly what I would have done. We'd been through countless lifetimes together, and my love for him—and his for me—was the one constant through all of them.

But now I had to stop him.

I turned to Belial, frantically coming up with a plan that probably wouldn't work, but was our only hope at stopping War. "Where's the key to Heaven?"

"I have it."

"Give it to me."

Belial scowled, but he took it out and rested the gem in my hand. It lit up immediately at my touch, reacting to my angelic nature. Only a few hours ago, this had been stolen from Jophiel's hands. Grief threatened to return, but I pushed it away. No time for that now.

"We need to get everyone out of here." I beat my wings hard against the air as I flew over the remaining living warriors, and then I remembered what Bastien had taught me. What he'd reminded me I could do. I gathered the light of truth in my palms, my powers so strong here in Heaven it felt like being hit by an electric bolt, and shot it over the field. As it hit everyone fighting, War's madness relaxed on them, just a little. Just enough to make them pause.

I landed in the middle of them and held out the gem, like I'd seen Gabriel do. The key reacted to my angelic blood as I thought of Earth, and a shimmering portal opened up. I concentrated and made it bigger, so multiple people could enter at once.

"Hurry!" I yelled, my voice booming across the field. "Go through the portal!"

The warriors seemed to snap out of a daze and began moving toward the portal, but I'd forgotten about Adam. With all the insanity going on, he had watched from atop his spectral white horse with a triumphant look on his face, loving the chaos and the death all around him. Now he focused on me and his eyes narrowed—and then he charged.

"I'll hold him back," Belial said, gathering hellfire in his hands. "Get everyone out of here."

I wasn't sure I could trust Belial, since he'd been on Adam's side only moments ago, but I couldn't stop to argue or question him.

All of the angels and demons still capable of moving headed to the portal, some of them crawling or helping others through, some flying on injured wings. Fenrir carried an unconscious or dead Nemesis on his back, but I didn't care at this point if they got away or not. All that mattered was getting everyone back to Earth so I could do what had to be done.

Belial flew around Adam so quickly he was a blur, attacking him with Morningstar, with hellfire, with darkness. Giving our forces enough time to escape. Whenever someone stopped and growled with War's rage again, I threw out more beams of light, focusing all my energy on making sure the truth won out. As I did, Gabriel opened a portal on the other side of the field, allowing even more people to escape.

An enormous spectral horse appeared in the distance, the color of dark red blood. It galloped toward us, passing by the angels and demons on the grass and approaching War. Lucifer mounted the massive beast and I knew we were out of time.

"Hurry!" I yelled. If they didn't get through soon, I'd have to leave some behind.

Belial suddenly hit the ground beside me, rolling in agony from Adam's sickness. The first Horsemen then rode across the field on his white horse and slipped into Gabriel's open portal, sickening anyone nearby along the way. The portal closed an instant later, and I swore under my breath.

Lucifer turned toward us and kicked his steed, his hatred and fury an oppressive cloud all around us. No doubt planning to do exactly what Adam had done.

We were out of time.

Across the field, Gabriel grabbed hold of someone with black wings—Azazel—and flew straight for my portal. A few others remained, stumbling to get through, and I feared they weren't going to make it. I had to give them a few more seconds somehow.

Before Lucifer's steed reached the portal, I blasted him with darkness and light, pouring everything I had into knocking the great love of my life backward. I wouldn't leave Gabriel or Azazel behind. I couldn't.

My son pushed himself up to his feet, his face twisting with resolve. Blue hellfire poured from his hands, packing enough punch to knock him back long enough for the remaining angels and demons to get through.

"Go!" I yelled as I shoved Belial toward the portal.

He shook his head. "Not without you!"

I had no time to waste arguing with my willful son. I was his mother, dammit. He should listen to me. As he turned to face Lucifer again while letting out a wracking cough, I wrapped darkness around him like a chain and tossed him through the portal.

Lucifer came closer, magnificent as he sat high on his steed, and I stood blocking the way. It was just me and him now. As it always had been.

"Get out of my way, angel," Lucifer commanded, his horse stomping its feet impatiently, turning the ground to lava with every step. But he still didn't attack me.

"I love you," I said, my voice choking with emotion and tears pricking my eyes. "I'll come back for you, I swear it. I will find a way to free you."

I rushed through the portal just as he charged me, then closed it right before War and his red horse came riding through. Leaving Lucifer alone

in empty, war-torn Heaven.

HANNAH



I collapsed to the ground, my body spent, my soul broken. Fuck, that had been close. If I'd been a second slower, War would have made it to Earth. I could still smell brimstone from his horse on me, and my hands shook with both terror and the horrible realization over what I'd done.

I'd locked my mate in Heaven. I'd left him as a monster. I'd done it to save everyone in this realm and every other, and I knew if Lucifer was in his right mind he would have approved of my decision—but that didn't make it any easier. Lucifer was lost to me, and I wasn't sure how I would ever get him back.

I gazed across the field, my eyes adjusting to the darkness. No one was fighting any longer, no matter what side they'd been on before. Imps lay next to angels, shifters groaned beside gargoyles. Archangel Raphael had been smart enough to stay behind on Earth with some Malakim to heal us in the event of something like this, and they flew across the field now, tending to everyone who needed it. I spotted Marcus bending over Kassiel, healing his wounds, and breathed a sigh of relief to see my youngest son was all right. I also saw Azazel speaking with Samael, and Olivia hugging Callan while Bastien looked on. All of them wonderfully, miraculously alive.

Adam had vanished though, and there was no telling where he'd gone. Although I'd managed to cage War, we still had Pestilence to deal with. Somehow we'd have to stop him before he did irreparable damage to this world we all shared.

"What have you done?" Belial stared at the spot where the portal had disappeared. He let out another horrible round of coughing, clutching his chest, and then collapsed against me.

"Help!" I yelled, and Archangel Raphael himself hurried over to me. He surrounded Belial in bright white light, slowly removing all traces of Pestilence's disease from him. It was a miracle Belial had fought it off so long. When the healing was done, I thanked Raphael and he flashed me a wink and a flirty smile, before rushing off to the next emergency.

"Why?" Bastien muttered, as he stumbled to his feet again.

I rested my hand on Belial's tattooed arm, willing him to understand. "I had to trap Lucifer there. It was the only way to contain him. He's an Elder God now, so he won't die. He'll just get angrier and angrier. But this gives us time to figure out how to get War out of him and remind him who he really is."

Belial clenched his fists, his frustration pouring out of him, so thick I could almost see it. "This wasn't supposed to happen. I was going to take on War to stop Pestilence. That was my plan, once I realized I'd fucked up by letting Adam become Pestilence. Father ruined everything."

My poor, misguided, stupidly brave son. He was far too much like his father. Probably why they'd never gotten along.

"He did it to save you."

Belial's face screwed tight with anger. "Why? Why would he save me after everything I've done?"

"Because you're our son." I wrapped my arms around him and hugged him tight, unsure which one of us needed to be held more. "No matter what you do, we will always love you."

The muscles of his back tightened at my words and he pulled away, his face hard. "You shouldn't."

Then he stormed off, his steps stiff and angry. I stared after him, but let him go. At least I'd confirmed what I'd always suspected—that he wasn't totally evil. There was hope for him yet. And Lucifer knew that too, or he wouldn't have sacrificed himself to save Belial.

Gabriel moved through the crowd to stand by my side. "Good thinking back there. You saved us all."

"I did what I had to do," I said with a sigh.

"I'm just glad the angry haze from War has passed. All I wanted to do was fight. I'd been about to declare open war against the demons again."

He looked at me, his eyes full of pity. "I'm sorry you had to leave him there, but it was the right thing to do. We can't let War start the battle between angels and demons again. Not when we've worked so hard for peace."

"We won't." No matter what else happened, I wouldn't let that battle start again. I was an angel, yes, but my heart was with the demons. I belonged in both worlds—and I would give my life protecting the peace between them. "And somehow we'll stop Pestilence too."

Gabriel held out his hand. "I look forward to working with you and your people on that."

I stared at his hand, confused, and then shook it. It took me a few seconds to realize what he meant.

With Lucifer gone, I was in charge.

I straightened up and regarded the Fallen and demons spread across the field. Some who'd been loyal, and some who'd strayed. They were all my subjects, and I would bring them together again. I would protect them. Guide them. Lead them. It was what Lucifer would've wanted.

I would find a way to save Lucifer—even if I had to kill him. Until then, I had to be strong. For our people. For Lucifer. For our children. Including the one I suspected was growing inside me now.

I was the Demon Queen.

It was time to rule.

THANK YOU for reading Devilish Mate! Lucifer and Hannah's story will continue in [Infernal God](#), coming soon. I promise a HEA for them...eventually!

Want more in this world? You can read the story of Olivia, Kassiel, and her other mates in [Seraphim Academy](#). Turn the page to read the first chapter!

Also, I'm working on a novella about Brandy and Asmodeus now. It'll be free and exclusive to newsletter subscribers, so make sure you [sign up](#) to read it when it's done!

For teasers, cover reveals, and more, make sure to join my [reader group](#)!

EXCERPT FROM SERAPHIM ACADEMY

1: WICKED WINGS

To find her brother, this succubus will tempt angels to fall...

Chapter One: Olivia

Seduction is a dangerous game, but one I have no choice but to play. And, as I've learned from my mother, seduction and deception often go hand in hand.

They do tonight, anyway.

I move through the party and try to ignore the growing hunger inside me. It's hard at times like this, when music is pulsing, drinks are flowing, and bodies are dancing a little too close. Inhibitions are down, temptation is in the air, and boy does it smell sweet. To me, at least.

I find a corner where I can survey the crowd, trying not to get too close to anyone. College kids at various levels of drunkenness dance, play beer pong, and try to talk over the loud beat of the music. A guy standing off to the side catches my eye and gives me a warm smile. He's got the face and shoulders of a small-town college football hero, and for a second I'm tempted. I picture digging my nails into those broad shoulders as I ride him hard, but I quickly glance away. He looks like a nice guy. The kind who wants to take it slow and brings you flowers on your first date. The kind I avoid.

Trust me, I'm doing him a favor.

A guy with sleeve tats and a dark goatee walks into the room with a "don't-fuck-with-me" vibe. I bet these rich snobs invite him to parties for

one reason alone: he sells drugs. He's exactly the kind of man I need tonight.

Chester's hand clasps my elbow possessively. "There you are."

"I was waiting for you." I flash him a fake smile. He's one of those kids who only got into USC because his parents bribed someone. Sandy blond hair with a perfect curl over his eye, dark green polo shirt, expensive smile—you know the type. His confidence makes him more attractive than he really is, as does his money. This is his house—bought by his parents so he wouldn't have to live in a dorm with the common folk—and his party. It's St Patrick's Day, he's wearing a "I'm Not Irish, Kiss Me Anyway" pin that lights up, and his breath smells like whiskey. It takes a good bit of acting not to cringe away from his touch, but Mother taught me well.

We met in the bar where I work, where he flirted with every girl he could before I took him home. Now he only has eyes for me. What can I say? I have that effect on people.

Chester pulls me up against him, his eyes hungry. "I missed you. Let's go back to my bedroom."

I play with the buttons on his shirt. "Only if I get a drink first. I'm dying for one of those green beers everyone's got."

He nuzzles the side of my neck like a ravenous bear. "Can't it wait? I need you now."

I might have gone a little too far with him last night. I swat his chest playfully and put on a cute pout. "Everyone's had a drink but me. Please?"

He has no idea I'm doing him a favor. If we sleep together again, he won't survive it. Humans can only handle one night with a succubus—or even a half succubus, like me.

"Fine," he says, but he tightens his fingers around my arm. "One drink and then you're mine for the rest of the night."

His mouth crushes against mine, and I can't help but take a little of what he's offering. His lust for me is delicious, but every second our lips touch puts him in more danger. The guy is a possessive, snobbish jerk, but I don't want him dead.

I push him away before I can do any real damage. "Go find me that green beer, and then we'll continue this."

His eyes are glazed and unfocused, his face a little paler than it was before, and at first I think he won't let go. Did I take too much? But after a second the daze passes, and he stumbles off to go get me a drink.

I blow out a long breath and search the room for that tattooed guy I spotted earlier. He's easy to find, with a group of entitled students passing him money in the corner in exchange for something in a little baggie. I use a tiny bit of my powers to catch his attention, and his gaze locks on me. Others in the room turn too—both men and women—and I know I could have any one of them if I wanted. Desire is powerful, and succubi are hard for humans to resist when we put on the charm. The only people immune are those in true love, and they're few and far between, especially in places like this.

He pushes through the crowd and makes his way over to me. "You alone, baby?"

"Not anymore." I rest my hand on his arm and tug a little with my magic, making his emotions flare.

He suddenly grabs me around the waist and plants his lips on mine, kissing me hard. Oops, I tugged a little too hard. Mother would chide me, but I'm still getting used to these powers and the thirst that comes with them. I hear it now, the little voice in my head that tells me to yank open his jeans and climb him like a tree. That voice is getting harder to ignore with every passing day.

I end the kiss slowly. "I could use some fresh air. Let's go onto the balcony so we can continue this."

He grunts and leads me outside, his hand on my ass. Subtle, he is not. I lean against the balcony and he leans against me. From below, sound of people laughing and splashing in the pool filters up. It's a perfectly clear blue Los Angeles day and the sun hits my bare shoulders, filling me with warmth. I'm wearing a little red dress that shows off all my curves, and my new friend is definitely enjoying the view.

His hands circle my waist. "I'm Trey. What's your name?"

"Olivia." I toss my hair back. "But everyone calls me Liv."

Chester comes barreling outside at that moment and yanks the guy off me. "What the fuck, man? You think you can come into my house and touch my girl?"

"We were just talking," I say.

"Looked like a lot more than that," Chester snaps. He shoves a green beer at my chest, and a little of it foams over. "Here, take your damn drink while I kick this guy's ass."

I grab the beer from Chester. As I do, I brush against his hand and unleash a little more of my power, heightening his emotions.

“I’d like to see you try,” Trey scoffs, as I take a sip of the green beer. It’s disgusting, but I gulp a bit down anyway.

Chester gets right up in Trey’s face and he’s so angry now his face is bright red. “Stay away from my girl.”

Trey takes a step closer and actually lets out a growl. “What are you going to do if I won’t?”

Chester throws the first punch at Trey’s face, unable to contain himself between his overwhelming lust and anger. Fighting breaks out between them, and I rush in to try to break it up. As I do, I’m shoved backward, hard. My beer falls to the ground with a loud crack and my back hits the side of the balcony—and then I’m over it.

Falling.

Falling.

Falling.

Wings unfurl from my back with a loud snap, breaking up my screams. For a second I hover over the pool, black feathers flashing through the air, while everyone down below and on the balcony stares at me. Then I plummet toward the water again. The second I hit it, everything goes black.

Exactly as I planned.

Want to see what happens next?
Get [Seraphim Academy 1: Wicked Wings](#) now!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Briggs is the *New York Times* bestselling author of paranormal and fantasy romance. She graduated from UCLA with a degree in Sociology and has worked for an international law firm, mentored teens in writing, and volunteered with dog rescue groups. Now she's a full-time geek who lives in Los Angeles with her family and a pack of fluffy dogs.

Visit Elizabeth's website: www.elizabethbriggs.net

Join Elizabeth's [Facebook group](#) for fun book chat and early sneak peeks!



DEVILISH MATE (CLAIMED BY LUCIFER #2)

Copyright © 2021 by Elizabeth Briggs

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Cover designed by Sylvia Frost, thebookbrander.com

ISBN (paperback)

ISBN (ebook) 978-1-948456-67-8

www.elizabethbriggs.net